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NIRGIS
AND
BISMILLAH.

— — — — —
TWO INDIAN TALES.

NIRGIS :

A TALE OF THE INDIAN MUTINY;

AND

BISMILLAH;

OR,

HAPPY DAYS IN CASHMERE.

BY

HAFIZ ALLARD.

LONDON :

WM H. ALLEN & Co., 13, WATERLOO PLACE,
PAUL MALL, S W.

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LONDON:—LEWIS AND SON, SWAN BUILDINGS, MOORGATE STREET

NIRGIS;

OR

DELHI AND ITS ENVIRONS.



CHAPTER I.

THE rays of the setting sun darted against the flank of the Collector's horse as it passed through a field of magnificent barley. The animal was of a bright bay colour, an Arab, and very handsome; the ears of barley which it had stolen from the field contrasted sharply with the bright glittering curb and bit. Every now and then it made a dash upwards with its head, impatient of control, and, loosening the rein, plunged deep into the barley, which, although in ear, was still green. The shadows on the ground were long, and spoke of another day about to be gathered to the harvest of the past; whilst one flank of the Arab was bright in golden

tints, the other was in deep shade—indeed, two knights coming from opposite directions might well have quarrelled about its colour. Two huntsmen walked by the side of the rider, one old, the other young—the sons of men who had never felt the restraints or burdens of civilisation, had never paid taxes, but lived on the free produce of the chase, as their fathers and ancestors had done before them : regarding large towns as clear proofs of effeminacy, they looked upon all lands which harboured game as free to the huntsman, and would have laughed at the idea of its being a crime to kill a stag—except indeed, perhaps, one with a collar and bells round its neck, reared by some Delhi banker.

The young man walked nearest to the Collector : he was tall—about six feet in height ; wore as a turban a white cloth folded well round his head ; a short jacket of glazed chintz, dotted with dark shades of brown, which reminded its owner of leopard spots, came a little below his waist, so as to allow of his waistband being tied well round his loins, over the jacket ; the waistband was supplied with a long hunting knife in a black leather case, and a horn, covered with red cloth, somewhat faded ; his trowsers were tight, and of a dark yellow colour. The smell of the smoking match told all that the deer, disturbed in its lair, and forced to bound forth and flee for life, would have a hard struggle for existence. The young hunter looked into the Collector's face, but the young Englishman was apparently feeding his thoughts on other scenes, for he heeded not the glance. How often are we not absent in spirit from the land of our exile ! After a few moments, the Collector impressively placed his right hand on the left shoulder of

the young huntsman, and said—"Kazim Ali!--where shall we all be this time next year?"

The young hunter started; but the old hunter replied—"Your highness knows Hindoostan too well to expect us poor slaves to answer such a lordly question, suited only to Lord Sahebs—may they prosper to the day of judgment!"

The Collector looked doubtful for a moment, and then said—"Spoken like an old wary fox: Shahzada, you have indeed learnt flattery and diplomacy in the jungles!"

The old huntsman readily assented—"Those who have been bred to the chase, and hope to live, must be more cunning than the game they wish to kill."

An interruption brought the conversation to a close, for a shout ran along the line of beaters, which extended far to the right and left; the game had started—a huge wild boar, with enormous tusks.

The huntsmen shrieked with joy, and a young Englishman galloped past on a fine black Arab, at full speed, calling out, as he dashed through the air—"DeMonte—now for the spear!"

The Collector reined in his horse, pressed its flanks, and seized his spear, which a groom handed to him. A tremor of anxiety convulsed the Arab: its nostrils expanded, and its eyes sparkled with fire. The bay Arab soon neared the black one, for the boar had somewhat changed its line of retreat, and it was a question who would gain the first spear—the great object of the sportsman in hog-hunting.

The old huntsman placed the stock of his matchlock on the ground, and steadying himself by the barrel,

looked on most intently, whilst he said musingly—
“What a wonderful nature our Feringhee conqueror has : at one time as modest as a dove, at another as fierce as the stag at bay !”

Kazim Ali observed, with some degree of petulance—
“We may all have to change our nature before the Collector’s year has passed !”

CHAPTER II.

How dreary and long a night in India appears, if you cannot sleep—the watchman calling out incessantly, in a language not our own, “Beware! Beware!” Pepys, on the 16th January, 1659, as he wrote—“The bell-man has just cried ‘Past one of the clock, and a cold, frosty, windy morning,’” probably was cheered at the sound of his own language. But the night has just ended, as proved by the increased sharpness of the air : there is also another sign—the watchman, who slept pleasantly through his hours of duty, has just awoken, and is preparing to go home, having wrapped his wadded cotton rizai well over his head, so that a long spear and a pair of legs are all the signs of humanity which remain. Another man, also a watchman, who has remained awake all night, has spent his time much more profitably—not indeed to the public, but to himself; for he has opened the door in one of the gates of Islamabad, and having looked well about the level country outside the gate, has permitted three friends, well laden with plunder from the beat of a sleeping watchman, to depart

in peace, after having made a list, with a view to a subsequent division of the spoil. The plunderers had hardly vanished before a horseman rode up, well protected by a large yellow and red flowered chogah, which was so ample as to conceal not only the rider, but the horse, excepting its neck and four legs, which were white; the horse's nose and forehead were also white—it was what is called a Panch Kallian.

The rider at once gave the salutation—"Salaam Alekoo!" The watchman readily replied—"Alekoom Salaam!"—but not without some trepidation, for he had only been just in time in letting his accomplices go forth.

The rider, whilst passing under the archway of the gate, remarked—"Zalim, what a treasure the Government has in such a watchful servant!" The watchman replied, but not loud enough for the horseman to hear—"Some plunder on horseback, some on camels, some on foot; those who are rich must contribute to feed the poor: how can I be supposed to exist on two rupees eight annas a month, with a debt, left by my father, of one hundred rupees, to settle, as bound by honour?"

The horseman passed on, unconscious of the watchman's feelings—'tis odd; our friends' thoughts are in their, not our keeping. The horseman seemed to know the road, for he looked neither to the right hand nor to the left. The horse also appeared at home, for his rein was loose, and he jogged on, turning as he thought fit, and at last pulled up before the door of a house of no very splendid appearance, if the outside of a house in the East may be considered as any index of what the interior may be expected to contain. But Natives of the East

are very cunning, and no doubt always try to conceal their real condition in life by a mean exterior—especially since Mr. Wilson's income tax has made appearances somewhat costly to their owners. The horseman now called out pretty loudly—"Is any one here?" No reply. Again he shouted; but no one answered. A third time he called out, "Is any one here?" The door opened; there was a flutter in a cage, which hung close to the entrance gate, and a parrot replied, "Nirgis is at home!"

CHAPTER III.

Afzul KHAN, for that was the name of the horseman, no sooner heard the name of Nirgis pronounced, than he dismounted, but with difficulty, for he was encumbered with his large wadded chogah and huge riding-boots, in which were carefully stowed away a few choice articles of jewellery which had been adroitly plundered from a confiding banker of Delhi, who never imagined that highway robbery could flourish under the English rule. As the watchman Zalim had clearly settled in his mind, so Afzul Khan was of opinion, that a man of spirit could not be expected to subsist on the paltry wages of fifteen rupees per mensem, paid irregularly by the Nawab his master.

Afzul Khan now arranged the bridle of his horse, fastening it tight round the peak of the saddle. This proceeding made the animal stretch out his legs, throw back his ears, almost roll his eyes out of their sockets, loll out his tongue, and champ his bit. Afzul Khan

next entered the door of the house, and found himself in a long low building, which was used as a ruth-house and bullock-stable. The ruth, which was covered with red cloth, stood on the right hand of the building as you entered it; the bullocks on the left: they at once made a dash at the intruder, but were pulled up sharp by the rings through their nostrils, to which were attached thin but strong pieces of cord, dyed blue.

Afzul Khan, with the detective eye of a marauder, at once priced the pair at Rs. 150. The clothing for the bullocks was hung against the wall on pegs of wood; it was blue, embroidered with white.

Upon entering the courtyard beyond, through another door, a fine neem tree might be observed, and also an old woman, shrivelled, and prematurely broken down in constitution: her white hair contrasted disagreeably with a vicious-looking countenance, and cunning, cheerless eyes. Diljan, for that was her name, was at once accosted by Afzul Khan, who appeared to be an old friend. She gave him a seat in the veranda of a building on the right hand side of the court on entering it. After he was seated, Afzul Khan thus addressed Diljan—"Nirgis is required to sing to-night at the Nawab's party; he feasts two Feringhee guests."

The old woman at once replied—"The commands of the Nawab be on my head and eyes! The old terms, I suppose—Rs. 5 a night for dancing, and food for my bullocks and attendants?"

Afzul Khan nodded his head; he was thinking of Nirgis. The old woman, by a glance at the horseman's face, knew this, and called to a servant girl—"Mungalec, tell Nirgis that Afzul Khan is here."

“And give her this nuzzur from a slave,” said Afzul Khan, as he drew forth a large pair of gold bangles from the recesses of his riding-boot.

Mungalee passed over to the opposite side of the court, and tapped at the door, on either side of which stood a vase containing a rose in full bloom.

“Come in,” said a voice of peculiar sweetness and attraction.

Mungalee opened the door, and passed on to the presence of Nirgis the singer. Her apartments consisted of two rooms, one used for sitting in, the other as a bed-room. There were evident attempts at refinement : a smart Iran carpet on the floor ; a small looking-glass hung against the wall, also a picture of the King of Delhi, and one of Lord Gough, radiant in colour and medals. A box, painted green, with yellow flowers, contained the singer’s dresses—blue, green, yellow, red, amber, and pink ; and a metal box with a lock guarded her jewels. Then there was a store of pan, of attractive green, in a niche in the wall ; two hand punkahs, and a few other petty ornaments. The charpoy was covered with a rizai of red, with a yellow border, and Nirgis sat on it crossed-legged, engaged in arranging her toilette.

Mungalee bowed low, with becoming respect, and gave Afzul Khan’s message and present.

Nirgis examined the bangles carefully, and then calculated their value by gently raising up her hand two or three times to test their weight. She, however, returned them to her servant with a displeased look, and gave this message : “Thank His Highness Afzul Khan, and say a poor dancing-girl cannot accept so rich a gift from the servant of a Nawab.”

Nirgis was about fifteen years old; you at once saw from the contour of her face that she possessed a good deal of natural ability; those who knew her well were also aware that she was of a good disposition. She seemed to move about and live in the worst society, without contracting its taint—like finely polished marble, which sparkles bright from year to year. Although uneducated, it was clear that some fixed principles of good influenced her, and the rude classes with whom she was brought in daily contact felt her power. Diljan was the reverse of her daughter; she had always been bad—a mass of female corruption. Money was her idol; she had amassed about Rs. 10,000 in hard cash, and buried it in odd holes and corners. Her jewels, furniture, and other property were probably worth Rs. 10,000 more. Still she was ready to undertake any dark deed which brought her money—she had no scruples of conscience.

If Nirgis ever said—“Mother, this does not seem right!” Diljan would at once reply—“What evil spirit can have bewitched my dear daughter, so as to make her trouble her head on so foolish a matter?”

When Mungalee gave her message to Afzul Khan, he bit his lip, put his hand on the scabbard of his sword, muttered something, and departed—much to the relief of the horse, who had stood very patiently outside the house. But the horseman did not leave before he had whispered into the old woman’s ear—“What a weak old woman you are, to allow a girl to stop the stream of wealth flowing into your treasury!”

The old woman exclaimed, as soon as the horseman had departed—“An arrant rogue, a plunderer, a mean

wretch : would that our Collector strung up such a monster ?”

The old woman now entered her daughter’s room, upon whom she fawned like a spaniel, praising her beauty in immoderate strains. Nirgis put her hand upon that of her mother, and said—“Mother, why should we not buy a little land, and avoid the evil ways of men like Afzul Khan ?”

“I am poor,” said Diljan ; “let me collect a few more rupees, then we will think of the future.”

“But death talks not of the future,” said Nirgis musingly.

“Would,” said Diljan, “I could see you married to some rich Feringhee : I would then be a slave to my dear daughter, and her poor mother would soon grow rich, very rich, on the offerings which a province makes to the old mother of a daughter as fresh as Noor Jehan. Alas ! alas ! what evil days we live in !”

The mother of Nirgis might perhaps have told her daughter what days she considered as peculiarly suited to an old woman without any idea of principle, had not the driver of the rath announced that all was ready for the party to depart, and set out on its journey for the Nawab’s entertainment.

Mungalee, Diljan, and Nirgis were soon seated ; the dancing dresses and jewels were carefully stowed away. A twitch at the reins started the bullocks into a rolling waddling pace. All gazed upon Nirgis as she passed by ; loud exclamations commending her beauty reached the singer’s ears. “What city,” said a seller of vegetables, “can boast of so sweet a singer ? Not even Shahjehanabad !”

Zalim the watchman was at his post: he asked the driver of the rath at what time he would wish the gate to be open, on the return of the party.

"Never mind," said the driver, with a wink of his eye; "we shall come back with a guard to take care of our earnings!"

After travelling for a few hours, the rath reached the top of a rising sandy piece of ground: the driver pulled up, and said quickly—"Look!"

It was time to look; for two horses, well and fearlessly ridden, came thundering over the low ground below—one a black horse, the other a bay; a huge boar was puffing along a little in advance. The rider of the black horse, who was nearest to the hog, dashed on: his spear glittered for a moment as he raised it—but it missed the hog. It was now DeMonte's turn: he called out to his Arab, which made a desperate effort, and the first spear was the Collector's—a crimson stream told how steady the hand and eye had been.

The boar now turned, and made a furious dash at the black horse; the horse reared, and the rider not being prepared, both horse and man fell to the ground heavily.

DeMonte, with a well-directed blow, at once laid the boar prostrate; but L'Adone, the rider of the black horse, was rendered insensible by his fall. There was now a call for water—every one urging its being brought, but, Indian-like, no one starting to fetch it.

Nirgis was more observant and prompt; for, leaving her rath, she ran up to L'Adone with a cup of water, which she had poured out with haste from an earthen vase which always was carried with the rath as a matter of course. A little water poured over L'Adone's face at

once recovered him, for Englishmen are accustomed to hard blows. Seeing Nirgis as his ministering angel, he was somewhat puzzled ; but knowing, by the cup in her hand, that he was indebted to her for assistance, he took a gold chain from round his neck, and gave it to the singer, saying—"Here is a small acknowledgment of your kindness."

"The Saheb-log, the rulers of our country, always reward poor slaves liberally," was the apt reply of Nirgis.

The hunting party now broke up ; and it was agreed, that as L'Adone had suffered from so severe a fall, the dance should be postponed ; therefore, after an early dinner, the camp was made snug for the night, the guards were set, and the watch-fire lit. The two hunters took up their position close to the tent of DeMonte, spreading a blanket from its ropes to keep off the dew.

"And so," said the old hunter, "the young Feringhee gave Nirgis the singer a gold chain?"

"Yes," answered Kazim Ali: "if our rulers have vices, penuriousness is not one of them : often and often have I thrown down a fine black buck at the door of a Feringhee Amer, and received Rs. 5 for every pair of horns."

CHAPTER IV.

WE again welcome our old friend Zalim the watchman : he is riding a clever little pony, with gay trappings, and is himself dressed very smartly : he is, however, a good many miles distant from his home at Islamabad, where he ought to be, assisting in guarding its poor people. The country through which Zalim is passing is somewhat wild, and hilly ; still it is pleasant to the eye. Zalim is singing a Delhi air—"My heart beats merrily." He now and then looks behind him ; he is evidently expecting some one—perhaps a friend ; possibly an enemy. He now speaks—"This is a pleasant wild country ; it has great charms for me. I hope to return by the evening with my waistband well filled—but my poor pony will then have a heavy load to carry !"

A low range of hills is now reached, and a speck or two on the horizon show that other people are moving besides our friend Zalim. A few minutes pass, and five camels appear, each carrying two men. The camels are fine, slim, swift animals, with languid eyes, small mouths, and capacious nostrils. All the riders appear to know Zalim, for they give the salutation of "Ram Ram." So Hindoos are in league with Mahomedans ! A few minutes pass, and a fakeer's house is reached, well removed from the haunts of man. The old attendant fakeer, dressed in orange coloured clothes, soon appears : he has a string of black beads in his hand, and is accompanied by a small long-backed dog. He comes up to the substantially well-built wall of the enclosure round his house, and gives the usual salutation.

All are welcome, and are soon seated in an inner room of the house, having stowed away the camels and pony in an outhouse. An ordinary traveller could not have detected the presence of so large a party, and a policeman's noticing anything extraordinary about the mendicant's house, would have been quite out of all precedent.

All are now eager to open the proceedings, and a sleek, pliant-tongued, clever-looking Hindoo is requested by Zalim to state how matters stand. "Now, Ram Sookh, you take the place of our Saheb Collector, and tell us how our accounts stand."

Ram Sookh smiled on all, opened a large red book, and thus addressed the meeting :—"Three months only have elapsed since our last meeting, and yet we have lost three of our members, devoted to our interests. One, I am sorry to say, met with a violent death—according to law they say : the two other members were sent over the black water of oblivion. We need not, however, regret the absence of men who have done their duty, for their shares will fall into the general stock by Rule No. 2—'No member, when lawfully convicted, can share profits.' This rule makes all sharp. We have cheering news from all directions—from Rajpootana, Agra, Meerut, Delhi, Lahore, Hyderabad, Gwalior, and Indore. Many plots for increasing our funds have been laid ; some are far advanced, all promise well. I am happy to state we divide a good dividend. I have made a classification, since I last met you, of the risks in certain plots, and shall hereafter propose a small percentage of extra profits to those engaged in them.

Some few charges have been incurred on behalf of our absent friends; I will read them out :—

Gratuity paid to Omlah of Magistrate				Rs. 500	0	0
Do. do. do. of Sessions Judge				550	0	0
To Chuprassees of Magistrate	-	-		50	0	0
To Thanadar	-	-	-	50	0	0
To Jemadar of Magistrate	-	-	-	75	0	0
A Dali for Magistrate	-	-	-	0	4	0
					<hr/>	
				Rs. 1,225	4	0

There are other petty charges, which I can read out to you if you wish—the detail is long

-	-	-	-	Rs.	200	0	0
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Rs. 1,425 4 0

All, however, cried out—"Declare the dividend."

"We divide Rs. 100 to each member," said Ram Sookh.

The dividend appeared to give satisfaction. Zalim apparently expected more, or he need not have been so anxious about his pony. The old fakeer received his share with a profound bow.

Conversation now became general, and it was very pleasant to hear in what high estimation the Indian police were held. "They are ours to a man," said Ram Sookh.

Zalim now rose, and stated that his conscience forced him to quit such pleasant friends, having made it a rule never to be absent from his beat, since he was bound to protect his flock. When many were slumbering in the town of Islamabad, Zalim's voice showed that he was wide awake, as he cried out—"Beware ! Beware !"

CHAPTER V.

THE wind blew mildly from the south-west, over the plain across which DeMonte and L'Adone were travelling on the morning after the hog-hunting expedition. Both the riders and their horses appeared to be in excellent spirits: they seemed sensible of the charms of the morning air, which in India endeavours to render some solace to the Englishman in return for the burning heat of a midday sun. Although the country was flat, still it was cheerful, for clumps of trees pointed out spots where numerous villages were scattered about. Who, a few years ago, would have thought of leaving the security afforded by the walls of a town for the country? None but the most daring members of society. But under the rule of the Company, these were the sure signs of a well-governed country, when the comparison was drawn between the present and the past.

As DeMonte rode along, many a rustic gave the usual salutation; for the Collector was a favourite. He was not too harsh; neither was he moulded to obey the touch of some plastic Native official. He possessed very considerable ability; but perhaps Government hardly appreciated his character, in which there was a strong tendency to tread the path which he had marked out for himself, not that pointed out by others. He was of a resolute temperament, and could never bring himself to court official favour by those sinister influences which many Englishmen, affecting to despise in Natives, practise with the greatest assiduity. Flattery was not a

means of advancement which the Collector ever cared to use.

L'Adone, as he rode along, was somewhat absent, and had not his horse been on the alert, and made a bound, both would have reached the bottom of a dry well, which was almost concealed by brushwood.

"I fear," said DeMonte, "you have not forgotten Nirgis?"

"To tell the truth," replied L'Adone, "I was thinking how pretty the little singer is!"

The Collector observed, somewhat quizzically—"You now see that a Native of Hindoostan may have attractions which you appeared to doubt a day or two ago!"

L'Adone did not appear to relish the Collector's remark,—for he answered somewhat sharply—"We must all owe our lessons in life to experience. Perhaps it is less foolish to cast a passing thought on an Indian girl than to trust the good faith of an Indian secretary!"

DeMonte probably would have replied, had not caution suggested silence; for L'Adone, a Queen's officer, fresh from England, had formed a poor opinion of many of the civilians of India—having detected, he thought, a mean tolerance of official duplicity, and anxiety to obtain promotion at a perfect sacrifice of self-dignity.

The Collector's house, for which both were making, was now in sight: a few minutes more and the riders dismounted, and gave their horses to the grooms to take charge of, and lead away to the stable. The two friends then entered the bungalow together. It was a long, irregularly built, thatched house, with plenty of rooms. The fittings-up were rude, and did not speak of much finish. The walls of the rooms were coloured

blue, but the cornices were roughly executed, and the ceilings, which were of cloth, coloured white, were not tightly drawn; consequently, there was plenty of space allowed for sparrows to find their way to the thatch above. There were a few pictures hanging against the wall; that of the Marquis of Wellesley was the most conspicuous. The furniture was good for the mofussil; a few pieces of Shearwood's substantial manufacture had found their way to this dreary outpost. There were bookcases, which contained some standard works. L'Adone appeared surprised at DeMonte's selections, for, upon opening one, and observing the Collector's marks, he said—"DeMonte, I had no idea you took any interest in such reading!"

DeMonte smiled satirically, and replied—"You fancied, I suppose, that a civilian's only food is beer, brandy, and cheroots;—office work done by a head clerk or meer moonshee."

DeMonte was a bachelor, and his salary being Rs. 2,250 per mensem, he kept up a good establishment of servants—about twenty; his stable contained five horses—three Arabs, a Cape, and an Australian. There was a garden attached to the house, with a good stock of orange trees in it; the paths were all in true oriental fashion, at right angles to each other. There were other trees in the garden, planted as the gardener's inclination suggested, for the Collector walked in it more for retirement, and exercise, and to enable him to indulge in his own thoughts, than for purposes of horticulture. Still, with all the advantages which the Collector's estate possessed, it was a solitary spot, to which constant habit alone could reconcile a man: it was an honorable exile

—nothing else. DeMonte was, socially speaking, isolated; he had no Europeans to associate with, excepting a Joint Magistrate, whose society was not congenial, on account of his extreme tenacity of his official dignity—any imagined slight cost the Government a sheet of foolscap. Thus DeMonte was obliged to trust to his own resources. In the cold weather—that is to say, for six months in the year,—living in India is just endurable; but for the other six a man is a perfect state prisoner, his time being divided between his private dwelling and his office. Yet this is the life so many of our English youths sigh for—exile, and the treacherous climate of the East! Where is the promise of mental improvement for the youth destined to such an existence?

As DeMonte and L'Adone sat at breakfast, the young officer appeared struck with the irksome life his friend must lead; for he said—"I could not long stand your way of life—a future so distant as almost to exclude all hope of its realisation."

"Possibly not," said DeMonte; "but your expectations and mine are very different."

L'Adone felt sorry for having, as it were, drawn a comparison between his own prospects in life and those of his friend; for, as the eldest son of a rich English family, he knew that in a year or so he would return home, having effected an exchange from the — Carabineers, which corps was stationed at Meerut, to some regiment serving at home. Nothing is better for a rich young Englishman than a trip to India; it makes him fully sensible of all the comforts of English life. An Englishman at home, waited on by a parlour-maid with creaking stays, is really more happy than your civilian

with his table loaded with food he cannot eat, attended by a dozen men-servants with folded arms, muslin dresses, and gold-lace turbans. Perhaps L'Adone would have said something by way of apology, had not a chuprassee, with body bent, and hands extended before him, clasped, asked—"Will His Highness favour the court with his auspicious presence to day?" DeMonte nodded his head.

Then there was immense excitement outside the bungalow. The jemadar ordered the Collector's horse; His Highness' office despatch-box, carefully guarded, was sent off; and it was soon known amongst the suitors that the Lord of Favour was on his way to court.

As DeMonte entered his court, a mass of Native officials rose, bowed most submissively, and then sat down again as soon as the Collector was seated. Not a word was spoken, as each man attended to his special duties. All the Native officials were dressed in pure white.

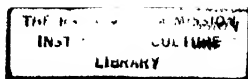
The court itself looked dismal enough; but the walls were high, and the room in which the Collector sat was airy.

"Call the head clerk."

Mr. Silva, a Eurasian, bowed himself into the Collector's presence, and was soon laden with the work of the day. He assented to everything the Collector said—"Yes, Sir"—"Certainly"—"Very good"—"Quite correct"—"Very satisfactory"—"Quite according to rule"—were the fleeting answers.

Mr. Silva received Rs. 150 per mensem, and hoped to rise "by your honour's favour."

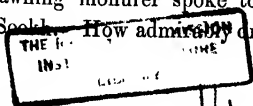
DeMonte had all his letters ready for the clerks to



copy out, and the interview was over in about ten minutes. The clerk bowed himself out of the room, and the sheristedars of the revenue and judicial departments were about to play their parts. The revenue sheristedar had filled his post for about twenty years, and was a perfect master of his work: he had risen from the office of purwanah navis to be roznameh navis; he had next filled the office of record-keeper; then that of a departmental mohurer. The other Native officials went up to the revenue sheristedar with a bow, to make over their papers to him, and to receive orders. His name was Bukhtawur Sing. The judicial sheristedar was much younger—not more than thirty years of age: he had risen by his own merits. The contour of his face told of the possession of ability of a high order. His name was Futtch Sing. He had a mass of papers before him, of which he was clearly the master; for he invariably turned up the leaves of the file at the culminating points. There were two large record rooms attached to the office, one for revenue, the other for judicial papers, which had been disposed of; they were apparently in admirable order; for as soon as a document was called for, it was produced.

Bukhtawur Sing soon got through his papers: he was at home in every case, and read admirably. Correspondences both in the vernacular and English were all ready—circulars—acts—regulations. How much our administration owes to these admirable servants!

It was now Futtch Sing's turn to clear off his day's work. As he walked up to the Collector's table, a fawning mohurer spoke to him—our old friend Ram Soobh. How admirably drilled he is. The records will



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show, that on the date of the division of the profits of the robbers' association, Ram Sookh was supposed to be on leave attending a sick wife!

Futteh Sing soon came to the last case to be tried—MOOZUFFER HUSSEIN, with DILLOO RAM attorney, *vs.* KAZIM ALI. Charge—*Trespass.*

The young hunter of the expedition of the preceding day stood before the Collector: he appeared uneasy without his matchlock; his eyes wandered about; he seemed not to know what was going on.

There was a deal of talking, and a deal of writing, questions asked and answers recorded. At last Futteh Sing said—"Kazim Ali, attend: your reply is being read to His Highness."

The defence was very long, but the hunter said nothing—he seemed to be trying to get at the trigger of an imaginary gun.

When the reply was finished, the plaintiff's vakcel or attorney was furious. DeMonte did not appear to care for his emotion, for he merely asked the hunter whether he had anything more to say.

Kazim Ali started, and said—"Your Highness, I do not know what it all means!"

DeMonte said—"You are charged with trespassing on the plaintiff's grounds, with having destroyed one hundred maunds of grain, and with having killed a buffalo."

The hunter replied—"I did follow a buck into the plaintiff's grounds, and killed him there. My grandfather has killed game on the same enclosure. I did no damage, and never saw a buffalo."

The attorney said—"You wicked man!—the buffalo's head is in the court!"

A coolie was called for : but as soon as Kazim Ali saw the head, he seized it, held it up in the air, and cried—"Justice, Company Bahadoor!—this is a buck's head, with the horns!"

The attorney said—"The hunter is a conjurer : it was a buffalo's head a few minutes ago!"

The case was of course given in the hunter's favour. As he left the court, his matchlock was handed to him by a friend. "All right, my friend," cried he : "there is still justice for the poor in Hindoostan!"

"What a fine defence you made!" said an old evidence-writer, who had come forward.

"I wrote nothing!" said the hunter.

"But I did," said the evidence-hunter, "in consideration for the four annas you gave me. That defence always succeeds—you accused the plaintiff of perjury, and murder, and thanked Providence that on the day in question you were miles away—&c., &c. I changed the buffalo's head for that of a buck. So you see you were not cheated by me of four annas!"

"Wonderful are the ways of justice!" said the hunter. "But I must seek in the jungles for my dinner; otherwise my wife and children will see the sun go down with empty stomachs!"

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER Nirgis's meeting with L'Adone, and his gift of the gold chain, she was silent, melancholy, and out of spirits. Her mother imagined that she must be suffering from the charms of an evil eye. A religious mendicant was therefore called in without delay, who, in despair, recommended a pilgrimage to the holy shrines in the vicinity of imperial Delhi. Accordingly, next day, as Nirgis's ruth approached the Kootub from the south, having traversed a somewhat arid and sandy plain, she was somewhat cheered and interested. The scene before her was novel: a small range of hills, of volcanic formation, was ascended and descended, and it was not long before Diljan pointed out the tomb of Sooltan Ghori, son of Shums-ood-deen Altamish, to her daughter, on the left hand side of the road.

"And what is the meaning of Altamish?" asked Nirgis.

"I have heard," replied Diljan, "it signifies eclipse—that Shums-ood-deen was born when there was an eclipse. But why, my dear, trouble your head on such matters!"

As the ruth moved on, ruins became more and more plentiful: here and there a graceful palm-tree had found a safe retreat amongst the tombs of the great. At the entrance to Malhroulie there is a fine old ruin on the left hand, called The Ship, from its supposed resemblance to a monster of the deep. We now traverse the streets of a city, desolate, dull-looking; devoted to the custody

of the dead. When the feast of flowers takes place, Delhi pours out her thousands, to moralise over the past. What a profusion of choice, chaste, architectural remains attracts the eye!—what elegant cupolas, what well-cut, slender pillars! How we long to know more of their past history! Here we have bright lasting colouring of Prussian blue, and lighter tints of blue: how well they have stood the blasts of ages, and the ravages of time!

The Pucka Serai is now on our left hand; we move on, take a turn, and the far-famed reservoir for water is on our right. Tradition relates, that years ago, as the Emperor Shums-ood-deen slumbered, the Prophet appeared to him, mounted on a fiery steed, and commanded him to commence a charitable work? The king started from his slumbers, and, rushing to the spot indicated to him, found the deep impress of the hoofs of the Prophet's horse. The work was then urged on. This king died A. D. 1235. Divers now jump down from a miraculous height into the well which once supplied the reservoir: they sustain no injury—aided, as they are said to be, by a guardian spirit.

The ruth now drew up at the door of the Dewan Am, where Diljan was acquainted with an old friend, with whom she had arranged to stay during the time she remained at the Kootub. All were welcomed by the wife of the khadim, Syud Noor Ali, who, upon remarking Nirgis's extreme beauty, could not help exclaiming—"How charming it is to see so lovely a flower blooming close to the tombs of the departed!"

As soon as Nirgis was rested, she naturally felt eager to learn something of the past history of the wonders of

the Kootub. Upon expressing her wishes to the khadim's wife, she replied—"How fortunate is your arrival!—a khadim is just about to read out a short history which he has drawn up for a young Feringhee, whose beauty and liberality have endeared him to all. May Captain L'Adone's star shine brighter and brighter!"

Nirgis blushed—why, she knew not. But it was time to take a seat behind the purdah and listen, for the khadim had commenced his recitation.

"My friends,—the rule of the Hindoos in these parts terminated with Rai Prithora: the Moslem invader Shalboodeen had in vain tried to conquer him, but woman effected what man could not. Love for the daughter of his rival, Raja Jye Chund, caused the affairs of state to be totally neglected, and disorders showed themselves. Shahboodeen advanced, a battle was fought at Talourie, near Panceput, and the rule of the Hindoos vanished. (A. D. 1248.) The daughter of Prithiraj or Rai Prithora was religious—she was a worshipper of the all-glorious sun. That she might pay her devotions to the chaste Jumna, the daughter of the sun, the Kootub Minar was built (A. D. 1143). Were we at the top of the pillar we should see the mystical Jumna far, far to the west. This was a proud offering to the deity: a flattering poet has written—'Thus a prop was erected for the falling, worn-out heavens!' Mahomedan ingenuity tried to appropriate this choice specimen of art for the Moslem rule, but historical truth has conquered the deception of kings. Shums-ooddeen Altamish (in A.D. 1229) appears to have set about converting the Kootub Minar, and the old Hindoo temple close to it, into a Mahomedan place of worship

verses of the Koran were inscribed on the minar, the stones which spoke of a Hindoo architect being abstracted. The same idea was adopted by Allah-ood-deen Ghilzie, who commenced building a rival tower (in A.D. 1310) together with four doors.

"The mosque thus laid out was called The Power of Islam, Adina, Juma Musjid. The circuit of the rival tower at its base is 300 feet. The far-famed iron pillar, with the mysterious inscription, which is within the square of the original Hindoo temple, said to rest on the head of a serpent, was erected by Raja Dhawa, or Medhavi (B.C. 895), to commemorate a victory over the ruler of Scinde. It is 22-6-0 in height.*

"For the present I shall omit any mention of the shrines close to the house; we shall visit them to-morrow, and ascertain whether I have correctly described them. We must mount to the top of the Kootub the day after to-morrow, and I will point out all the spots of peculiar interest which are spread out on the country below—I will now briefly enumerate them merely:—Sufdar Jung's tomb—he was the father of Shooja-ood-dowla, King of Lucknow; tomb of the Emperor Humayoon; shrine of Nizam-ooddeen—a saint of blessed memory, who died in A.D. 1321,—the tomb was erected in A.D. 1324 by Khaleeloola Khan; the shrine of Nuscer-ood-deen, at Cheragh Delhi—A.D. 1373; Kude-lam Shurceef—A.D. 1373; Indurpat, or old Delhi Fort—A.D. 676; Feroze Shah's Minar—A.D. 298; Bholi Bhut-tiari—whose fortunes are told,—A.D. 1354; the Muth Mosque—said to have been built with the Prophet's one

* *Vide* Mr. H. Prinsep and his profound writings in the *Asiatic Researches*.

grain of muth, presented by a king to a courtier. All these places must be visited by the devout pilgrim whose eyes are fixed on Mecca. Learn, then, a lesson of mortality—we shall soon pass away, like a sparkling sunbeam.”

All thanked the khadim, and applauded him—
 “Thanks—thanks ! Wah—wah !”

* * * * *

It was early morning ; thousands of doves proclaimed the departure of the dark hours of night. Nirgis and the khadim’s wife stood for a few moments under the lofty gateway of the Dewan Am : it was solidly built, of red biana stone ; and a little to the rear of where the two pilgrims stood, on the right hand, was a small shop, at which rose-water and choice sherbets were formerly sold to the princesses of the house of Timour.

Nirgis now looked into the square outside the gateway, and saw, through a door opposite, a portion of Ahsanoola Khan’s house—he was physician to the king of Delhi. On the right of the square stood Mirza Zuman Shah’s house—a son of Mirza Salem Shah, whose large pukka house filled up the side of the square opposite to Nirgis. It subsequently became the property of Husseinee Begum. Zeenut Mahal and Ta Mahal had apartments within the enclosure of the Dewan Am : the jealousy of the rival queens was a popular subject of gossip amongst the Delhi people. A sharp turn to the right now brought our pilgrims to the entrance gate of the burial-grounds of Kootub Saheb. The gateway presented no architectural attractions, and was sadly defaced by large red stripes.

Nirgis held her offering of flowers, sweetmeats, and

eight annas, in her hand, and felt a religious awe as she passed on into the court beyond. The birds were singing in two straggling tamarind trees, a few in a bur tree. After walking for about twenty feet, she came to a fine pavement of red stone: here shoes must be taken off. The walls of the Dewan Am were still to her right, and also tombs of persons of no note. On the left hand was a small shrine of Murad Buksh, a concubine of Shah Alum. Nirgis, looking into it, saw two tombs on a raised platform—one of Murad Buksh on the right hand, another of her daughter Hyutumissa on its right. Several boys were reading their Korans, which lay open before them; the tutor sat on the right of Hyutumissa's tomb. Beyond was a small court, with buildings around it: their arches and pillars told of chaste design and execution. As the chant of the choristers rose louder and louder, Nirgis felt the sympathy which still binds us to the dead.

The two pilgrims then passed on into the enclosure of the Muth Musjid, which was entered by a small doorway of red stone. It is opposite the shrine of Murad Buksh, in the corner of the courtyard. The mosque, which is built of white marble, has three domes and six minarets. The court contains sixty-three musallahs, or spaces divided off for devotees. The guns of Delhi, which were at practice, were here distinctly audible. This mosque was built by Shah Alum, the son of Alum-geer. A screen of cut marble divided off the mahujjir; a minar rose from it. Another, partially destroyed, was on Nirgis's left hand, as she looked up the small court. The khadim's wife now led Nirgis into the burial-place of the kings: it is reached by a small door

and three steps. In a shrine opposite the door, stands the tomb of the unfortunate Shah Alum—the blind king, the victim of the wretch Ghoolam Kadir. The tomb is of white marble, not remarkable for its carving. On its left is the tomb of Akbar Shah, father of Bahadur Shah, ex-king of Delhi : it is of black marble. On the right of Shah Alum's tomb is that of Bahadur Shah, *alias* Shah Alum, son of Alumgeer. This tomb was much injured by a portion of the minar close by falling on it. Mirza Fukroo, the heir apparent, a man of much promise, who died of cholera before the rebellion, is buried out of the line of tombs, in the right hand corner—the ground close to the tombs did not from their foundations allow of his being buried there. The courtyard containing these tombs is in a ruinous state. Nirgis now retraced her steps, entered a door opposite to that with the red stripes, and passed down a small street with a blank wall on the right hand : on the left hand stands the shrine of a courtier of Alumgeer's time—that of Mahtamed Khan. The singer entered by a door on the right hand : on its left, before entering, is the tomb of Syud Ahmed : he was killed about seventy years ago, when returning to Delhi, close to the ice-pits of modern days. Passing on, we have on the right the tomb of Kdotub Sahib, shut out from pollution by a massive white marble screen ; on the left, beyond a few tombs in an open space, on a raised platform, is the mahujjir of Mirza Muddoo, son of Furokhsir. The corner of the treasury peeps out on the left ; we note a brilliant purple stripe on it. We pass the back of Furokhsir's mosque, and enter a fine gateway of marble. A sharp turn to the right will, after a few moments,

show two steps to the left. Before us, after passing through another door, we have the painted china wall of the Kootub. We turn with it on our left hand into the enclosure which contains the tomb of the saint, covered with a white cloth.

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But Nirgis is not allowed to enter the holy of holies—her offering is here accepted; so she ascends the steps, and sees the tomb of Kazee Hameed-ood-deen of Nagore, the tutor of Kootub Saheb. The enclosure between it and the door beyond is devoted to the tombs of the Banda Nawab's family. A turn to the left, instead of one to the right to the china wall, will bring us into a courtyard, in which, immediately on our right, we find the tomb of Ahmed Buksh, who took an active part in politics in Lord Lake's time—his son Shums-ood-deen was hanged for the murder of William Fraser, Commissioner of Delhi.

The tomb of Mumtaz Mahal is more to the right: she was the mother of Jehangeer, son of Akbar Shah. Jehangeer caused a good deal of trouble in the time of Mr. Scaton, Resident of Delhi. The young prince jeered at the British representative, using the word "luloo;" and subsequently, as Mr. Scaton was going to court, inside the palace, one of the prince's follower's fired at him from the wall: the ball passed close to the Resident's ear. The palace was attacked, the prince captured, and sent off to Allahabad; although the pliant vakeel of the King of Delhi tried to make out that "luloo" meant a *pearl*, instead of an *ass*.*

Zabta Khan, father of Ghoolam Kadir, of execrated

* For a character of Mr. Scaton, and his policy, see *Kaye's Metcalfe*.

memory, is buried in this enclosure. The last enclosure visited was that of the Jhujjur family: Nijabat Ali Khan, Ismael Khan, Fyz Mahomed Khan, and Fyz Ali Khan, are buried here. The tomb of Fyz Mahomed Khan is very handsome, and worth carefully examining. Nirgis placed her hand on the white marble rail, and remarked how pure the marble was.

"Now," said the khadim's wife, "we will go home; we have finished our pilgrimage for to-day."

Diljan welcomed her daughter:—"Oh dear! why do girls love to look at tombs? To my mind, they are but gloomy friends."

Nirgis was weary. Half satisfied, half distressed, she laid down; and as sleep stole over the young pilgrim, she seemed again to wander amongst fields and tombs. She came to one different in shape from all she had seen; and an old man with a white flowing beard pronounced the name of its tenant—L'Adone!

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning was arranged for ascending the Kootub Minar; and the khadim's wife settled that Nirgis should finish her visit before Noor Ali and his party arrived. As soon as Nirgis reached the minar, she tried to look to the top of it, but in doing so she was obliged to throw her head so far back that a little cap which she wore fell off; thus confirming the truth of the old proverb as to the minar's height.

"How can I feel certain," asked Nirgis, "that this is a Hindoo, not a Mahomedan work of art?"

The khadim's wife replied—"It is said that Hindoos of the olden time used to build without basement platforms; and you will mark that the door of this minar faces to the north: the rival minar—there it is,—you will observe, faces to the east."

Upon ascending to the top of the minar, Nirgis was able to see the Jumna beyond Bulubghur; the deserted Toghlakabad, the subject of a prophet's curse, no one could mistake. The tall minar of the Juma Musjid of Delhi towered above the restraint of the wall of the city, at a distance of about ten miles. On the left of the road leading to Delhi, close to it, about half-way, the tomb of Sufdar Jung was a prominent object; the tomb of Humayoon is considerably to the right of the road. The country around the Kootub is hilly, stony, dry, and desolate—a fit resting-place for the dead. Nirgis was struck with the square character which all the buildings and enclosures in the vicinity of the Kootub had taken, exemplified by the Power of Islam: immediately below, the temple of Jogmahi; not far off, the fine garden of Mahboob Ali Khan, the chief eunuch of the palace; the garden of Sir T. Metcalfe, Bart., named by him "Heart's Delight," which contains a very choice shrine to the memory of Molana Kamalee and Molana Jamalee. The serai, and the two bungalows which are used by English travellers, have the same character; also the avenues in their immediate vicinity. The shrine of Imam Zuman is just below the minar. Nirgis could clearly see the outline of Rai Prithora's Fort: its ditches leave no room for doubt—it must have been a strong place before the perfection of the art of war. We must not omit to mark the tomb of Adham Khan, foster-brother of the

great Akbar, regarding whom we shall have to relate a tale hereafter; nor must we pass over the tomb of Shums-ood-deen Altamish. The whole of the country below is spread over with ruins; but we lose all traces of them as man goes forth to his labour—cattle are raising up clouds of dust, and fires are casting forth their smoke towards the heavens. Noor Ali was late; he saw nothing when he reached the top of the minar. Nirgis listened to the statistics which he gave regarding the dimensions of the minar.

“It had originally,” said the speaker, “seven stories; its height is said to be 300 feet—the calculation is, however, incorrect—

		Steps.	Yards.
1st Story	- -	156	32
2nd „	. -	78	17
3rd „	- -	62	13
4th „	- -	41	8½
5th „	- -	41	8½
		<hr/> 378	<hr/> 78½

“We must also allow ten feet for the stone top, which has now been removed—thus we have about 250 feet; and I do not just now recollect the height of the story of wood, which was taken down years ago. However, 300 feet is a very fair number for the vulgar to recollect. The basement of the minar outside measures 100 feet.”

Nirgis now returned to her mother, accompanied by the khadim's wife: she could not fail to observe the flat roofs of the houses of the Kootub or Mahroulie, and to form her opinion that the style of architecture was

different from anything she had ever seen before: the carving on some of the pillars, which were a portion of the Hindoo temple in Rai Prithora's time, is very deep. These old Hindoo pillars, over which hundreds of years have passed, though much mutilated by Moslem fury, in detestation of idol worship, still stand erect, and attract the wonder and admiration of the traveller. After the destruction of the Hindoo temple, the Mahomedan conqueror buried his dead within its limits—a few tombs, probably of leading men, were remarked by Nirgis; and also a tomb of one of the fair-haired conquerors from the West, for whom Providence found a resting-place far from Old England—a British soldier. Who shall rouse him from his deep slumber? The sound of the bugle of his corps now falls dead upon his ear; his firelock is held by another. Doubtless, as he left his English home, and bade farewell to his village friends, he promised himself a safe return to the same snug cottage, with its little orchard and choice trees, on a bright day in spring; and as the ship dashed through the waves, and the spray fell on his blooming cheek, his constant thought was of—"Home, sweet home!" Years passed on; another twelvemonth would set him safe in Old England, with his honest savings and his dazzling medals: as he toiled through the long march with a favourite chum and a pet dog, he would often speak of home, and his old parents. But there came a rumour of disease, and one day the soldier felt the call, and, at the beck of cholera, set out for a long journey;—and here he slumbers amongst the great dead of ages, and dynasties passed away—a monument of England's power!

CHAPTER VIII.

As the morning gun of Delhi resounded through the Dewan Am, Nirgis and the khadim's wife started for the tomb of Nizam-ood-deen. At this early hour, the streets of Mahroulie were deserted; here and there a dog barked at the sound of wheels, and a trader might be seen apathetically preparing his shop for the expected profits of the day. The tall arches of the Power of Islam, upon which Shaboodcen Ghori, Allah-ood-deen, and Sultan Mowaz-ood-deen had bestowed so much care and thought, looked dark and towering as the ruth passed under one of them. After passing through the two gateways of the serai, in which the English have fitted up two rooms, Nirgis found herself in the open country. The air was fresh, pure, and fragrant. After traversing the Delhi road for about a mile or so, a cross-road was taken to the right, which led towards the most sacred shrine of Nizam-ood-deen. It was now daylight: the country was wild; cultivation scanty—the stony nature of the soil, and the depth of water, not favouring the progress of agriculture. A nice, fresh-looking garden was pointed out to Nirgis by the khadim's wife, on the right hand side of the road—the property of the guild of the Saroogeas of Delhi. Cultivation now became more abundant. But we have almost reached the far-famed tomb of Nizam-ood-deen. We are often, as we look right and left, reminded of the dead by the cupolas and minars which mark the resting-places of many a man of note who once breathed the

fresh air of Cashmere, Cabool, Samarkand, Balkh, and Bokhara:—were the Hindoo Koosh and the lofty peaks of the Peer Pinjal crowned for a grave on the hot plains of Hindoostan?

Now we again tread on sacred stones, as the khadim of the shrine relates how Saint Nizam-ood-deen died in A.D. 1321, and points to the elaborate tomb erected by Khaleeloola Khan in 1824. Then the khadim passed on to the tombs of Mirza Baber and Mirza Jehangeer, sons of Akbar Shah. Upon pointing out the tomb of Shums-ood-deen Takkee, the khadim related how that years ago, as he was on guard at the quarters of the Emperor Akbar, Adham Khan, the Emperor's foster-brother, rushed frantically past, and was challenged by Shums-ood-deen Takkee, who paid the penalty of devotion to his duty. Adham Khan still continued on, until the Emperor stood before him. Adham Khan was paralysed. The Emperor took advantage of this hesitation, and, with a blow, struck him dead. (He is buried, as we wrote before, at the Kootub). A brother of Shums-ood-deen is buried in the Marble Hall of the sixty-four pillars—Kokul Tash Khan.

“The Emperor Mahomed Shah is buried there,” said the khadim. “Unfortunate monareh!—unwilling to credit the approach of Nadir Shah until Khan Dowlan Khan, marshalling the ill-appointed royal forces, fell fighting, and Boorhun-ool-Moolk was captured. A dark stream of blood which flowed through Delhi soon told of the presence of the conqueror.”

“But pass on,” said the khadim, “to the tomb of Ameer Khusroo: to him we are indebted for the Acjaz Khusravee, and the Eight Paradises; also for thousands of verses.

“Amcer Khusroo was a Turk of Targhana, a son of Amcer Syfoo-deen, and became an ardent disciple of Saint Nizam-ood-deen.”

Nirgis felt that she was likely soon to forget what she was learning; she therefore now and then made a few notes with a pencil which she carried with her. Many Mahomedan girls learn to read, but few Hindoos: when a Hindoo girl becomes a widow, then she commences her studies! Rajpoot girls are an exception to this rule.

Now we stand before the tomb of an old friend—the female Indian politician. This, then, is the resting-place of the accomplished Jehanurce, a daughter of the Emperor Shah Jehan, a sister of the subtle Alumgeer. There are two spaces on the top of the tomb, so contrived that flowers or small trees can be planted in them: a rose was in full bloom in the circular space immediately over the spot where the head of Jehanurce rests. Nirgis left this tomb with regret. A few minutes brought her to the platform of the magnificent tomb of the Emperor Humayoon: the house from the roof of which he fell is still pointed out in the old fort; it can be seen from the platform of the tomb.

“The old king rests,” said the guide: “strange that, after all his hopes and fears, adventures and exile, he should have ended his days so painfully!”

“But time presses, and we must set out for the shrine of Nuscer-ood-deen, at Cheragh Delhi,” said the khadim’s wife. Cheragh Delhi was about five miles off. Nirgis thought much, as the ruth moved on, of the vanity of humanity—a mere shadow, a tale, a dream! What is beauty?—a passing sunbeam! But the culture of a pure mind—who shall fathom its beauty?

The Patowdie Family buries its dead at Cheragh Delhi. Old Fyztulub Khan lies there: he once moved gallantly with Lord Lake's force; shone conspicuous for his gallantry in Monson's retreat; was wounded time after time. He recalls the days of Ochterlony, Seaton, Metcalfe, Amcer Khan, and the Mahratta camp. It was necessary that Nirgis should reach the Kootub the same evening: so, after a rapid glance at the tombs of Mukhdoom Zynooddeen, Mukhdoom Kumal-ood-deen, and Saint Nuseer-ood-deen, she started again in her ruth, noting down that the walls around the shrine were built by Mahomed Shah for four and a quarter lakhs of rupees. She just peeped into the fine garden of Sufdar Jung, and contrasted its condition with the ruined state of that of Humayoon's tomb; and as the evening gun told of the close of another day, the ruth pulled up at the door of the Dewan Am—much to Nirgis's delight, for jolting over bad roads in a ruth is fatiguing.

As we write in our secluded tower, we feel solitary and forgotten! We will look down on the plain below: is there no sign of peril?—no murmur of Mahomedanism—no complaint of Hindooism? The air is still as death. May our countrywomen and fair young children sleep in security? “Yes, yes!” cry all: “we are a favoured race!” “Are we all safe?” “Oh yes!—Don't you hear the deep voice of one of our fair sons cry, as he passes to and fro, ‘All's well?’” As the sentinel passes up and down, what is he thinking of?—“Home, sweet home!”

CHAPTER IX.

NIRGIS had indulged in the hope that she would be allowed a day's rest at the Kootub after her return from Nizam-ood-deen's. But she was doomed to disappointment ; for on the following morning a royal horseman rode up to the door of the Dewan Am, and gave the order that Nirgis was commanded by the Refuge of the World to attend the next court or "jushan," in her professional capacity. There was no good not wishing to comply with an order of the Great Mogul ; but Nirgis, not having ever been inside the palace, was, if the truth must be told, rather glad of an opportunity of being initiated in the mysteries of court etiquette, and of hearing some of the court gossip. When, therefore, the ruth was ready, she clambered into it with a considerable degree of excitement, and was glad to find herself on the way to Imperial Delhi.

The morning gun, fired from the ramparts of Selimghur, sounded loudly through the streets of Delhi, and reminded all that it was a court or jushan day. The Kings of Persia instituted the jushan, which lasted for nine days : it was a festival in honour of the sun. Its institution is traced back to Jamsheed.

Nirgis's thoughts were soon devoted to henna, anti-mony, perfumes, and the mysteries of an Indian female's toilette. At last, all being declared perfect by her slave girl, and Nirgis having carefully stowed her jewels and dancing-dress in the ruth, ordered the bullocks to be driven at a sharp pace down the Silver Street, toward

the palace, which soon came in sight. What a glorious appearance it has !

Diljan's statistical information was now of use. "The palace," she said, "was built in 1638 (A.D.), at the cost of about one crore of rupees : its length is 1000 yards, its breadth 600 yards ; its walls are twenty-five feet high. The guard at the Lahor^e gate, together with the killedar, have been located there since the time of Seton Saheb, and his dispute with Mirza Jehangeer. A Feringhee said to have been the architect of the palace ; a man from Italy, as you will see, my daughter, from a picture of Orpheus in the Dewan Am, of inlaid stones. What should we have known of Orpheus had it not been for the Akal Ferance ?"

What stirring scenes the walls of the palace have witnessed ! They can never forget the night when the miserable Mahomed Shah sat with the fierce Nadir Shah, and listened to the singing of the choice performers of Delhi : in an evil moment, a number of men, dressed as English soldiers, discharged their muskets in sport. Nadir Shah, fearful of treachery, jumped up and cried out—"There's false play."

Mahomed Shah courtcously restrained the northern warrior, remarking—"It's sport !"

The amusement proceeded, but the reports of the muskets were heard beyond the palace walls. The city people were not slow in spreading a report that Nadir Shah had been killed ; and the property of the invaders was at once plundered in all parts of the city, and the greatest confusion ensued.

When morning dawned, thousands of half clothed Moguls came under the windows of the palace : standing

on the sands on the banks of the Jumna, they shouted —“ If our King is alive, let him hastily show himself !”

Nadir Shah dressed himself in red, and, proceeding into the city, ascended the steps of the Black Mosque, and there drew his sword. The work of slaughter commenced, and was not stayed until Nizam-ool-Moolk, a person of great weight and influence, conspicuous for his personal appearance and fine flowing beard, came close up to Nadir Shah, and cried out—“ If you are a King, pardon !—If you are a Merchant, sell !—If you are a Butcher, kill !”

Nadir Shah in reply said—“ I have yielded to your white beard !”*

Mahomed Shah, also, coming to the rescue of his subjects, is said to have repeated this verse : “ Open the eye of example, look at the power of God : my way of life has assumed an auspicious form.”

Nirgis, seeing a crowd of richly dressed courtiers making for the palace, asked her mother to point out the most distinguished, which she did, saying—“ That is Ahtiram-ood-dowla—the physician Ahsanoola Khan : he has a voice, they say, in most of the King’s councils. That is Hakeem-ool-Mamalik or Hakeem Imam-ood-deen Khan. That is Itimad-ood-dowla, or Hamed Ali Khan : he was wuzeer at Lucknow in former days. Again, you see Zoolfekar-ood dowla, or Mahomed Ali Khan. That is the chief eunuch, Mahboob Ali Khan. That is Raja Saligram ; Raja Devec Sing ; Zoolfekar-ood-deen ; Hyder Hussum Mirza ; Captain Dildar Ali Khan ; Syf-ood-dowla ; Syud Ghoolam ; Abbas Khan—”

* About seven thousand people are supposed to have been massacred by Nadir Shah.

The crowd now became so great that Diljan could not point out any more great men to her daughter, and the spot had been reached where court etiquette prescribed that all should dismount and walk humbly to the foot of the throne. Some took the way of the Dewan Am, some that of the Khansumani Court. Upon reaching the Red Purdah, etiquette laid down that a salaam must be made ; another before the throne.

Diljan next pointed out Ahmed Kuli Khan to her daughter—the father of the favourite queen, Zeenut Mahal.

The preliminaries of the court had been arranged. Nirgis took her place, and observed that the dorough of the elephants had marshalled them with their gay trappings and painted foreheads. Mala Buksh (elephant) was very conspicuous : he always made a salaam when the King appeared. The darogah of the stables had arranged his richly caparisoned steeds in the court of the Dewan Khas. The criers, mace-bearers, khawas, negroes, and kulars, had all taken their places.

Thanks to Meer Futtch Ali, the throne is in its proper place, all georgeous and gay ; but it does not equal in value the peacock throne which Nadir Shah carried off : that was worth a crore of rupces ; this only four lakhs. The royal princes are allowed to sit in the presence of the King : we notice Mirza Mogul, Beg Mirza Abool Hussun, Mirza Saharab Hindce, Mirza Khyar Sooltan, Mirza Aboo Bukr, and Mirza Juma Bukht.

All have their nuzzurs ready : the Agent on behalf of the Company gives one hundred and one gold mohurs ; other persons from four to five gold mohurs (we are

speaking of Europeans): the return presents will be seven pieces and three jewels to the Agent to Government, and five and three pieces and two jewels respectively to others, according to rank.

As the king seats himself on the throne, the criers raise their voices—"Oh King!—Refuge of the World!—may yours be safety; may your friends prosper, your enemies be exterminated!" Nirgis joined in with the chorus—"May your pleasures last for ever!"

Again the chorus was—"I have realised my heart's desires!"

Again—"The singer prays for blessings!—May they be poured out freely!—May the sounds of music be auspicious!"

The European officials have presented their nuzzurs, and have been carried off to the khilutkhana, to be clothed in dresses of honour. The Agent has been decked out in a jacket of gold spangles, with gold sleeves. The European officials having been again presented, make their thank-offering of two gold mohurs each. How queer and out of place these gentlemen look! Some have sticks given them, to lean on!

The mace-bearers warned all to keep in line; a blow on the toes of a man out of line was his reward.

Nirgis was an attentive observer of all this, and could not understand why the Great Mogul was allowed to be so great inside the palace, but a mere shadow beyond its walls. Many had wondered before the idea had suggested itself to the young girl, and remonstrated in vain at the false position of the Mogul.

But what have we to do with politics? A man near Nirgis was relating in an undertone how that Bahadur

Shah, King of Delhi, was born in 1775 (A. D.). His mother's name was Lalbui. He came to the throne in 1837, and the cunning men of Delhi extracted these words from the corresponding letters of the Mahomedan year of his ascending the throne :

1000	=	Gh
4	=	d
200	=	r
4	=	D
5	=	h
30	=	l
10	=	y

1254 Hejira = 1837 A. D.

"An ominous word is that of 'Ghader Dehly,'" said the old dame.

Asudoola Khan, *alias* the poet Mirza Noushah, and Malik-ool-Shaorah Zoak, were also pointed out to Nirgis by her mother as men to be noted. Also a few Peczadas.

The King is addressed with folded hands as—The Refuge of the World—Peer Mursheed—Kuramut—Huzarut.

Mahboob Ali Khan used to excite the laughter of many, and the wit of Zoak, by saying—"Ari Huzarut."

The jushan is over, and all are departing. But many eyes had observed the beauty of Nirgis; amongst them those of the old Mogul. As he entered his harem, a number of bearer women appeared, and carried the old monarch to his inner apartments.

When there, he said to Zeenut Mahal—"Bebee, inquire who that young girl is who danced at our jushan to-day."

"Obeyed, Refuge of the World!" said Zeenut Mahal.

"I dare say that she will be found to be of the same caste as Taj Mahal." Taj Mahal was of low origin; a rival of Zeenut Mahal.

But a secret council is to be held: Ahsanoola Khan, Ahmed Kuli Khan, Mahboob Ali, and Moonshee Makhand Lal wait outside.

CHAPTER X.

WHILST the Native courtiers mentioned in the last chapter were waiting for admittance to the royal presence, a man of unusually courteous manners, easy address, and handsome person, walked up to them. All, as if touched by an electric spark, rose, and the usual formal salutations were given and returned. Let us introduce our Native friend. He is a diplomatist—the Meer Moonshee of the Delhi Agent. Bulwunt Sing's family has for many years filled responsible offices under Government; the members of it have always proved themselves faithful and trustworthy. Bulwunt Sing was no exception to this rule, and was a great favourite with his immediate superior, the Agent. The Moon-shee was a good Persian and Arabic scholar; was well versed in the past history of Hindoostan; was a master of the rules of court etiquette, and the way to carry on or detect a political intrigue. He knew how to frame a

treaty with all the learning, tact, and cunning of a first-rate diplomatist, and was far more useful to his master than Mr. Hammond was to Lord John Russell when he went to Vienna and tried his brains against those of Russian diplomatists.

Bulwunt Sing had a very retentive memory, and an observant and aristocratic brain. He could in a moment draw out a thread from the skein of the past political events of Delhi. Perhaps he had too deep an insight into the political morale of Englishmen in India, had he wished to talk about it: he always, however, kept the failings of his masters to himself, and drew his own inferences. He was aware that Englishmen, talking about official justice, often neglect its dictates when interest is concerned; for he had heard how Ochterlony had been turned out of the Residency of Delhi, to make way for the exquisitely courteous and ridiculously polite Mr. Seton; but he could fully appreciate the merits of Metcalfe, when, as a youth, he was first appointed Resident. He was, however, convinced that the success of some of Metcalfe's treaties was the offspring of the well-trained brain of a Native diplomatist. Some are disposed to assert that Metcalfe owed his success to his straightforwardness: we must add, backed by a military force—that is the key to diplomacy in the East! The horizon was clouded—dark with threatening clouds: the star of the old soldier Ochterlony shone bright over the Himalaya Hills. Metcalfe was promoted; Ochterlony succeeded him as Resident. Bulwunt Sing had heard how Ochterlony entered on his duties with the zeal of a boy. There was another rumour of war, and Ochterlony marshalled his troops. Government wanted to get rid of the old man—his policy was disapproved

of ; and the old soldier was turned out of office—to die at Meerut of a broken heart. But Metcalfe saw that his policy was good. And thus Bhurtpore fell ; honours were distributed, and all rejoiced. But the sun rose day after day, regardless of all, and as its morning's rays fell on the tomb of the old chief, they pointed to the work of official injustice.

Then Colebrooke came, to reap a harvest of sorrow. Charles Trevelyan, we fear, from his nature, so fully exhibited in mature years at Madras, did not act from first to last with an honest English heart.

Next came Hawkins, with his pride and his learning, and fell out with the King on a point of etiquette—the Resident would ride into the palace beyond the spot at which Nirgis was forced to dismount : the King remonstrated, and in a public correspondence used the word “ bidanad,” which the Resident could not endure.

But a mace-bearer announces that the Refuge of the World commands the attendance of Bulwunt Sing, who at once folds his hands, and as soon as he is at the proper distance from majesty, bows and gives the salutation—“ Refuge of the World !—may you prosper !”

A lady is also present : it is Zeenut Mahal, the daughter of Ahmed Kuli Khan, whose ancestors were of Persian extraction. Taj Mahal having gained too much influence at court, the courtiers arranged that the King should marry Zeenut Mahal. The Refuge of the World readily assented to the proposal, and was so anxious to have the ceremony completed that he went so far contrary to etiquette as to agree to go to Ahmed Kuli Khan's house to fetch the bride. Taj Mahal, hearing this, wringing her hands, cried out, “ You have for ever destroyed the prestige of the crown !”

Zeenut Mahal was anxious to marry the King, and to rule the palace at Delhi—and perhaps, some day, Hindoostan !

Zeenut Mahal was seated on a tuppak—a piece of red cloth, round in shape, upon which the favourite queen is allowed to sit in the presence of royalty. The King sat on a small square charpoy, with silver legs.

The King asked after the health of “Shining Star”—the Agent to the British Government; and having received an appropriate reply, said that he had sent for the Moonshee to talk over the validity of some bonds held by the traders of the city.

Zeenut Mahal now chimed in: “Meer Moonshee!—why is such corruption allowed to go on in the city courts? Alas!—how blind the English are! Tell the Agent all this must be stopped! You understand?—tell him this from the Refuge of the World, not from me. Now look at this bond: is it genuine or not?”

Bulwunt Sing looked at it, but was silent.

“You do well to be silent! You see this bond?”—producing another. “It has a red seal; it is genuine: Why? Because *I* seal all genuine bonds myself! You see I eat pawn: well, when a deed is to be sealed, I lick the paper, and the ground of the seal is red! The bond on which your city court has given a false decision has a white ground to the seal—it is a forgery! Now tell your master this from the King!”

The King assented, saying—“Yes, Bebee; it is as you say!”

Bulwunt Sing withdrew, treasuring up the information that pawn is the genuine index to a royal deed, fresh from the tongue and lips of a Delhi Queen !

CHAPTER XI.

THE royal physician Ahsanoola Khan, Nawab Ahmed Kuli Khan, the chief eunuch Mahboob Ali, and Mukhand Lal, the Meer Moonshee to the Great Mogul, were now admitted to the royal presence. The cabinet council freely discussed politics ; but a casual observer could at first hardly detect whether the king was sounding his courtiers, or whether the courtiers were paving the way for ascertaining the sentiments of the king.

At last Zeenut Mahal spoke : “ Were Mirza Juma Bukht appointed and acknowledged as heir apparent, there would be hope for the future.”

“ Aye,” replied the Queen’s father—“ strange futures have brought relief to the family of Timour ”

Mukhand Lal, Meer Moonshee, said slyly—“ If a mean slave may be permitted to speak, he would represent that the royal house of Timour may perhaps benefit by the present !”

All were fully alive to the Moonshee’s meaning ; for there was not a house in Delhi in which the cartridge question was not being freely canvassed. But Zeenut Mahal, who was not quite sure of the ground on which she was likely soon to tread, cried out, with a good deal of cunning—“ Now mark my words !—We owe all to the English ; we are therefore grieved to see them carry on their affairs of state so very carelessly !”

To an accurate observer of the working of the human mind, it was evident that the Delhi council was not deficient in diplomatic skill and political penetration ;

for they were conversant with the exact position of the Company. A rule supported by a Native army exists only as long as it is obeyed by the spirit which has raised it and kept it together.

"The only doubt as to success consists," said the physician, "in correctly answering the proposition—Will the European forces of the British Government be able to keep the Native army in check until reinforced from England?"

Mahboob Ali affected to laugh at the idea: but Zecnut Mahal said, with a good deal of sagacity—"I have remarked that the beardless English soldier is under implicit control, and that all the Feringhees are like pearls well strung together: our people, when once their passions are let loose, are incapable of obeying orders. When I see an English lady dash along on her fiery Arab, I feel that our soldiers are unable to cope with the white-faced conquerors from the West!"

Mahboob Ali answered meekly—"Oh! your Highness—animated with the spirit of Islam, we shall all soon become Rustooms! When the power of the Refuge of the World is fully established, I propose to pay Mecca a visit!"

"Well spoken," replied the Queen; "but you appear to forget that in a religious quarrel the Christian legions will unfurl the banner of the Cross."

"They say," said the poet Zoak, who now came forward, "that the legions of the Feringhees are accompanied to battle by the spirits of those who have fallen in their ranks!"

As the Refuge of the world heard these words, he said—"Thanks, friend; thanks for a poetical idea!"

"We can fight," said the chief eunuch, with a hollow voice, "with the living, but not with the spirits of the dead."

"Then you will lose the day," said the poet; "for the Feringhees are led on by spirits and angels, who care for and minister to the wants of the meanest British soldier!"

The King was almost silent during the council—he was composing poetry. He gave a copy of some verses which he had written to his moonshee, to be copied into the royal diary, and then distributed to the dancing-women of Delhi!

The poet Zoak now turned to Mahboob Ali,* and said—"As to your being on the eve of setting out for Mecca, allow me to recite a verse which I have composed:—

"Jo dil bhoot khane me bhoot se luga chuke,
Wo Kabatain chhor ke Kaba ku ja chuke."

The point of the couplet consists in a play on words. All laughed heartily at the apt hit of the poet, and Mahboob Ali was not over pleased as he saw that the old Mogul Bahadur Shah could hardly suppress a smile.

"We shall not allow Mahboob Ali to leave us," said the Queen, "until he has proved the propriety of his own couplet—'Fight like men, that you be not dressed in women's clothes!'"

The twelve o'clock gun now sounded loudly through the palace, and the councillors felt a chill, for they knew that one false move would ruin the royal cause.

* Mahboob Ali was a notorious gambler.

The council broke up, and all were convinced that there was no retreat.

The bubbling fountain at Achbal throws up its sparkling waters from hour to hour; they pass on to the clear stream of the Jhelum, to assist in joining the vast ocean; they never revisit the valley of their birth. Thus it was with the Delhi councillors: they were destined to float down streams of blood—not to empire, but to poverty, death, and infamy?

CHAPTER XII.

OUR English seasons have their special favourites in the world of flowers: January and February can claim grey and yellow crocuses, primroses, and anemones; March has its chains of daisies and bouquets of blue violets; April glitters with double white violets, wall-flowers and cowslips, lilies and tulips; May crowns itself with roses and honeysuckles. So it is with age: it allows a special lightness, brilliancy, and joyousness of heart to youth. Nirgis was acutely sensible of this feeling as she awoke at the summons of her mother Diljan, the morning after court-day. No English girl, after attending a drawing-room, could have felt more contented than Nirgis, for the day which had just dawned promised fresh amusement. Indeed, a pleasure past is no longer regretted when it is certain that there are still fresh amusements in store, which can be snatched from the hand of time.

Nirgis had been promised a trip through the imperial city, with a sketch of a few of those buildings which

were celebrated, together with some statistics which she was anxious to collect. But the month of May requires that sight-seeing should be done in the morning, since, as midday approaches, the streets of Delhi are hot, close, and by no means attractive.

Now Delhi is a city to be approached with some amount of historical knowledge, and this Nirgis in a measure possessed. Her teaching had not been very profound; still, for a country dancing-girl, she knew a good deal. She had noted down, as she collected the facts, that Delhi had ceased to be imperial on eight different occasions, and that the seat of government had once been removed to Dowlutabad. It had been ascertained that Inderpat was the old name for Delhi, and that its limits then extended from the walls of the old fort to the Daribat, celebrated for its perfumes and its brilliant illuminations at the Dewalee festival—especially the shop of the chief perfumer located in it. But before ever Inderpat was known, Rajah Judhister had founded a capital at Hustnapoor, on the banks of the Ganges. Nirgis often wondered what was the origin of the name Delhi: some said it could correctly be traced to Dahaloo, Rajah of Kanouj; others said—"No; the soil about Delhi being soft, and unable to retain tent-pegs firmly in it, led to the name being given."

Old Delhi, Nirgis found, was founded by Rajah Aurangpal in 676 A.D.; that the old fort is by some called Sheerghur—a name derived from Sheer Shah. Whilst attending court, Nirgis had been instructed that the Fort of Selimghur, which abuts into the river Jumna, had been built by Selim Shah, son of Sheer Shah. The cost of this fort, which others call Noorghur, was four

lakhs of rupees. The bridge which connects Selimghur with the palace was built by Noorodeen. The old dame who had informed Nirgis about Bahadur Shah, and the close sympathy there was between him and Ghader Dehly, had also run over on her fingers the chief places of note in the palace.

"We have," said she—"1. the Nikar Khana, or Hutyapool; 2, Dewan Am; 3, Khas Mahal; 4, Imtiaz Mahal; 5, Dewan Khas; 6, Chota Bythuk; 7, Asado Tower; 8, Shah's Tower; 9, The Place of Slumber; 10, The Tower of Gold. Each one of these places has some story attached to it. You know, perhaps, continued the old gossip, that the palace was nine years in building; that its ditch is twenty-five yards wide, and ten yards deep; that it is adorned with twenty-one towers; has two gates, two posterns, and two small doors; that seven of its towers are round, fourteen octagonal. Then you must visit the Bead House, the famous Bath, the Garden the Gift of Life, the Mahtub Garden, and the Motee Mahal."

Bernier, when describing Delhi in 1663, called attention to many marked particulars which had entirely disappeared when Nirgis made her tour through the city in 1857. In the time of Aurungzebe's physician, there seems to have been a great scarcity of good provisions; they were, it is true, available to rich people, but not in profusion. In 1857 a marked improvement was observable: free markets had brought plenty into the bazars, which groaned with eatables of all kinds. Many handsome houses had sprung up, and covered most of the open spaces on which the Native chiefs used to encamp, with their followers, to whom the guards of the palace

and the city were entrusted. The thatched cottages of which Bernier used justly to complain, causing, as they did, endless fires and damage to property, had in many instances been supplanted by handsome shops and dwelling-houses. Every man could in 1857 call his time and his labour his own. This led to the discontinuance of men of the same trade being congregated in large workshops—goldsmiths in one, blacksmiths in another, and so on. Each man followed the bent of his own inclinations; a fair field was open to individual skill and enterprise—a man could rise and prosper without the support and protection of a special patron.

But the shrill music from the Nikar Khana, of which Bernier at first complained so bitterly, but, becoming accustomed to at last, rather liked, warned Nirgis that it was time for her to set out with her guide, for the fiery sun of Hindoostan, which changes not, was driving on his brilliant chariot apace through the heavens.

Nirgis's guide was one of those pliant-tongued women of Shahjahanabad who delight in talking. Looking at Nirgis, she said—"We must both wear *boorkhas*; we shall then see and not be known—a very convenient custom." So the guide slipped a boorkha over Nirgis's head, and both set out.

"Now observe," said the guide: "this is the Silver Street. It was built by Jehanura Begum; she also constructed the Oordao Bazar. Whilst the Silver Street is opposite to the Lahore Gate of the palace, the Fyz Bazar, which is 1,050 yards long and thirty yards wide, branches off from the Delhi Gate. It was built in 1650 by Ashurabadi Begum, the wife of the Emperor Shah Jehan. She also built the mosque which is situated in the bazar."

Hearing the conversation of the guide, an old Moolla chimed in—"You had better tell the young lady that the walls of the city at first cost a lakh and a half of rupees; that next year Shah Jehan expended four lakhs more on them. You should know that the city walls have thirty-nine towers, and fourteen large and fourteen small gates; the wall of the city is twenty-seven feet high, and twelve feet wide. It took a great Feringhee traveller (Bernier) three hours to ride quietly round our city."

The guide, finding the old Moolla likely to prove a better instructor than herself, put a random question, hoping to check the old man's conversation. "Tell us," said she, "how many bazars your Feringhee talked of?"

"Two principal bazars, and five inferior ones," was the prompt answer.

Nirgis now ventured to ask about the canal which ran through the Fyz Bazar.

The old man at once informed her—"The Fyz Canal was first constructed by Sooltan Ferozeshah Ghilzee, in 1251. It leaves the Jumna at Khizerabad, in the Umballa district. It was in the first instance made as far as Safidan, a royal hunting-ground in those days; belonging now, as you are probably aware, to the Rajah of Jhceud. The distance to Safidan from Khizerabad will be thirty coss, I should say. It was then for years neglected, and stopped; but the Emperor Akbar ordered it to be cleaned out in 1561, and called it the Sha-ab Canal. It, however, again fell into bad repair, but having been taken in hand by the Emperor Shah Jehan, it was brought on from Safidan, and now, as you see, is a very great comfort to the poor people of this large city."

Nirgis thanked the old man, who, after searching

about for some time in the portfolio which he carried with him, produced a paper, which he gave to Nirgis, saying—"These are the principal sights which you should see about Delhi." He then walked away.

"A regular Delhi gossip," said the guide; "I wonder what the paper contains!"

"We will sit down under this tree, and read it," said Nirgis.

*"Directions for Travellers who may visit the Far-famed
City of SHAH-JEHANABAD.*

"One should see—1, Black Mosque, built by Ferozshah; 2, Khari Baoree, which was built close to the Lahore Gate years and years ago; 3, Juma Musjid, built by the Emperor Shah Jehan in 1650, and cost ten lakhs—it was constructed in six years; 5,000 workmen employed daily; square, 136 × 136 yards; it contains the Durga of Asar Shureef; 4, Begum's Garden, made by Jehanura Begum in 1650; 5, Futtehpoori Mosque; 6, Ashurabadi Mosque, 1650; 7, Sirhondi Mosque, outside the Lahore Gate; 8, Shalimar Garden, six miles from Delhi, built by the Emperor Shah Jehan (Place of Pleasure); 9, Garden of Roshanura, in the Subzi Munde (she was a daughter of Shah Jehan); 10, College of Zuboonissa, daughter of Alumgeer, outside the Cabool Gate; 11, Mosque of Aurungabadi, in the Punjabi Street; 12, Zeenut-ool-Musjid, on the banks of the Jumna, built by a daughter of Alumgeer; 13, College of Ghazee-ood-deen Khan, at the Ajmeer Gate; 14, Golden Mosque, built by Roshan-ood-Dowla in 1721; 15, Mosque of Daud, built by Shureef-ood-Dowla; 16, Junta Munta, built by Rajah Jye Sing in 1724; 17,

Fukhrool Musjid, near the Cashmere Gate ; 18, Ghat Nizamode, anterior to building of city ; 19, Mosque of Roshan-ood-Dowla in Fyz Bazar ; 20, Golden Mosque ; 21, Jyn Mundir, built by Lala Hunsookh Rai, and Lala Mohun Lal, in 1800."

After reading the paper, Nirgis carefully folded it up, and stowed it away. She little knew the use the information she was collecting about Delhi would be to the British Government ; that to her note-book the success of one of the most celebrated sieges in history would be mainly owed.

Our two travellers walked, talked, and looked about until they were completely worn out, thoroughly satiated with sight-seeing, and careless of all architectural beauty. As both stood on the high platform on which the Juma Musjid is built, it was resolved that a doolee should be hired, and that home should be sought. At that moment a man with venerable white beard appeared, bearing a silver stick. He made a profound bow to Nirgis, and said—"The Refuge of the World desires your presence in the palace !"

A palace spy is, we fear, sharper than a Delhi policeman. How did he trace Nirgis in her boorkha ?

CHAPTER XIII.

A wish expressed by the Refuge of the World was not to be thought lightly of ; so Zeenut Mahal, after some consideration, summoned one of her faithful attendants, and gave her instructions that she was to search for Nirgis the dancing-girl, and bring her into the royal presence.

After the departure of the slave-girl to execute the royal mandate, Zeenut Begum fell to thinking whether the dancing-girl might not perhaps prove a rival. What if the Refuge of the World, selecting a new favourite, should discard the favourite Queen, as he had already disgraced Taj Mahal? She next passed into conjecturing what the future would bring for her son Meerza Juma Bukht—a throne, or what? Then Zeenut looked through the marble lattice-work of her window, and gazed meditatively on the waters of the Jumna, which flowed tranquilly on below: what did they care who ruled inside the palace, as they murmured on their way to the vast ocean? What impression could the tears of some disappointed favourite make on the mystic stream?

Thus, when Nirgis made her appearance, having been found by the slave-girl in her house, which her mother had hired in the Silver Street, the Queen was in a somewhat soft, melancholy mood. Woman's nature, however, soon gained its ascendancy over her, for she eyed Nirgis with a quick critical glance, and could no longer be sceptical as to her very great beauty.

"Could you serve the Refuge of the World faithfully?" asked the Queen.

Nirgis, not abashed by royalty, at once answered—"I have been brought up amongst trees and flowers; I should always feel a prisoner in Delhi!"

"Oh!" said Zeenut—"many think so before they have tried a city life. I liked the country better when I was younger—before I had made an idol of ambition."

Nirgis was pleased enough with the Queen's appearance, and said that she could willingly remain with her

for a week or so, but not longer: "For," said the singer, artlessly, "I am a subject of the Company, and do not like the idea of being a palace prisoner!"

Zeenut smiled incredulously; but seeing that it was no use pressing Nirgis on a point of feeling, she assigned an apartment to her, and told her that she was at liberty to quit the palace whenever she thought fit.

Nirgis was escorted to her room by two slave-girls—Rosebud and Heart's-delight.

The rumour soon spread that Nirgis was to reside in the palace, and court gossip speculated as to whether she would rise high or not at court. The feet of many royal women had trod on the pavement over which the singer had just passed: some had risen high; some had fallen very low, and died miserably—for instance, the wife of the royal Dara.

Diljan was tossed about by such a sea of excitement that she could not speak whilst she arranged her daughter's room. She put everything into good order, and having finished, cried out—"This is indeed happiness to a poor old mother, whose whole being is devoted to the service of a lovely daughter!"

Nirgis soon began to pick up hints as to court etiquette, to observe what was going on inside the palace, to gather up the variously tinted threads of politics, and to take an interest in what was passing around her. She soon found out that every day events were discussed in a different way inside the palace from that in which they were treated outside it. Strange people were talked of: an army of Russ log; the Moslems of Iran; and news was said to have been received from places and persons of whose existence Nirgis had never had the

most vague suspicion. As far as Nirgis could judge, the Company's rule was by no means acceptable to the people of the palace. She asked Rosebud "Why?"

"Because," said the slave-girl, "the contract of the Company makes everything so dear!"

Whilst the palace and its ways were subjects of ridicule to the townspeople, and especially to those living in the country, the palace people seemed to move about in an unreal world of their own—there were immense pretensions to be found linked both with poverty and wealth, rank and mean birth. There was a form of address, both in writing and speaking, carried to the verge of the ludicrous. Language had clothed itself with a gaudy, a flowery mantle, which seemed to be worn in the most ordinary walks of life. You did not ask a man *how* his health was, but "how the disposition of his enemies" was! Upon a reply being given, the prompt wish was—"May the ills of your enemy be his special dowry!"

There seemed to be a longing for the future amongst even the menials of the palace, who appeared to consider that it would bring about some improvement for them.

Rosebud and Heart's-delight assured Nirgis that "they would soon exchange their chintz pyjamas for others of silk, and silver earrings and bracelets would soon be replaced by others of gold. The change which the lower orders in England expected on the passing of the Reform Bill was soon to make all the palace people rich. The choicest perfumes were about to gratify the smell, the most delicate food the palate. It was whispered that the Company would soon pass away, and that a new tenure of empire would be granted, no one knew how, to the Great Mogul.

Diljan soon inhaled the intoxicating draught of anticipation. Nirgis could not make out what it all meant: she however amused herself by keeping a diary, in which she noted down all those circumstances which most attracted her notice; there was a good deal of novelty, a good deal of excitement.

When Nirgis spoke of DeMonte as her Saheb Collector, Rosebud laughed, and asked where his master was to be found.

"The Company Bahadoor, all know," said Nirgis, "lives in London."

The gossip of the Sahiban Ali Shan's entrance-hall soon diffuses itself amongst a people too eager at all times to learn what their rulers say and do. Nirgis could therefore tell the two slave-girls, who had never seen a Saheb, a good many things which made them laugh heartily. But when Nirgis gazed on the magnificent buildings about Delhi, the work of its emperors, she felt puzzled how the Company had attained its present exalted rank. All that she saw and heard perplexed her; she however resolved on the first opportunity to send her Saheb a petition from Nirgis, a well-wisher, for she seemed to feel that all was not right. This would be a relief to her mind. Whilst cogitating over the composition of the letter, Nirgis was summoned to Zeenut's presence; and on her way, she met the King's councillors, who had just had an interview. She could not help overhearing the remark of one, who said jocularly—"In about a month we shall have a countless army, and an overflowing treasury!"

Zeenut directed Nirgis to sit down on the ground,

and then entered into conversation with her. "So you think that the Company is your master?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Nirgis; "I have never known any other hakim."

"You then do not consider yourself bound to serve the Refuge of the World heart and soul?"

"I am not a royal slave," said Nirgis; "I am free!"

Zeenut then asked whether she could be faithful to her personally?

"Your Highness! I am but a poor country girl," replied Nirgis, "but my heart warns me that you want me to do something which you think my feelings tell me is not right!"

"Why do you think so?"

"Because your Highness, not being certain which of the paths is right, seems to wish to have one close to you on whom you can trust."

Zeenut now threw off all disguise, and said—"Nirgis, you are right: I wanted to insure your serving me faithfully as Queen of Hindoostan!"

"As long as the Company lives, I am its subject," said the singer.

"The Company has ceased to exist!" said Zeenut. She pointed, as she spoke, to the river Jumna, over which thousands of people were passing from the Meerut side. The tumult of a vast multitude was borne gently on the breeze, which blew in at the palace window. Men on horses and on foot could be clearly distinguished; some were in uniform, some not; the most striking colours were red and light blue.

"What does it all mean?" said Nirgis.

"It means," replied Zeenut, "that the army of the Company has passed over to the Refuge of the World!"

"Then the dome was right," said Nirgis, musingly, "when she told us that Bahadur Shah's name was connected with Ghader Dchly!"

The Queen shrieked—"A bad omen for a royal cause!"

Delhi, like some lovely flower-garden, a perfection in beauty, was on the point of being despoiled; still she heard no warning voice.

The surge of mutincers passed over the Jumna; in a few minutes more it had entered the city. There was a buzz, as if a hive of industrious bees had suddenly been capsize: the work of plunder, murder, and rapine had commenced; there were cries for mercy, but no one held out a pitying hand; there were shots, shouts, and sighs—all the passions of a barbaric race were allowed to have full play.

As Nirgis thus sat with Zeenut, and heard what was going on but too distinctly, the young girl took the Queen's hand, and said—"Oh, lady! no cause can prosper which commences with such scenes of blood: the Company's rule may have ended, but who can check the career of these wicked men, stained with the blood of women and children!"

Zeenut was silent, for she felt that what the singer said was but too true. There was a stir in the outer court, and the King's councillors hurried into the presence chamber, panic stricken and out of breath.

"This, then," said Zeenut, satirically, "is your royal army, come to restore the empire of Hindoostan to the Refuge of the World by the plunder of Delhi!"

"We fear," replied one of the courtiers, trembling, "that we have committed a political mistake: we have called up a demon whom we cannot control!"

There was now a hum of many voices in the ante-chamber, and loud speaking: the purdah was raised, and men with ferocious countenances, disordered clothes, and bloody swords, rushed into the royal presence, claiming their reward. All were panic-stricken, except the singer, who said—"Retire; blood calls for blood! You shall all be rewarded at the foot of the throne by One who never yet failed to reward the good and punish the evil-doer!"

There was a shout of applause, and the murderous crew quitted the royal presence. As one of the most forbidding of the party reached the open court beyond, he cried out with frantic gesture—"What an angel!—how lovely!—how truly she spoke: we shall all be handsomely rewarded for to-day's work!"

"Yes," answered an old man—"the singer spoke truly; for she pointed to the Day of Judgment?"

A chill came over all; every one slunk away, silenced and trembling, to his own house. But a light figure passed rapidly out of the palace; it was the singer Nirgis, who had heard that DeMonte was in the city.

When we have freely quaffed passion, how languid we feel as conscience asserts its sway! How ghastly the past looks! How we turn our eyes away from it! When will the murderer of that sad day in Delhi find rest in this world? He will find it at the hand of the British soldier, whose flushed face and sparkling eye tell all that there are still true hearts in Hindoostan.

How clear the bugle-call rings among the mountains,

as the "assembly" is sounded by good British lungs. Look how the red-coats come clustering round their standards—how the soldiers' arms sparkle in the sun! A few moments of silence, and the order is—"March!" All knew where they were bound for. Many looked on Kussowlie for the last time; but when were England's sons not eager for the fray?

But listen—the band has struck up: all know the tune—"The girls we leave behind us!"

Thus, as our brave soldiers march forth to conquest, their hearts still linger amongst the green fields and happy homes of England.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Collector slept soundly; but he was watched anxiously by a tall man—by our friend the hunter Kazim Ali, who thus expressed his thoughts: "I wonder whether his highness is dreaming of gold. I fear that when he awakes he will find the world less pleasant than when he went to sleep!"

He then went up close to the Collector's bed, and touched his foot. The Collector awoke.

"I trust you have had pleasant dreams?" said the hunter.

"I was just on the point of learning the grand secret of gold-making when you awoke me. But what brings you here, Kazim Ali?"

"I fear," replied the hunter, "that you will lose more gold in Delhi to-day than you will make: Delhi is in the hands of the Rebels!"

"Nonsense!" said DeMonte.

"Look down into the street below," said the hunter.

DeMonte at once jumped up, and looked down on the angry crowd which was passing to and fro in the Silver Street. Now and then musket-shots were heard in the distance.

"Your horse is ready," said the hunter, quietly, as he looked well to his own matchlock and sword.

"Where are your highness' arms?" he then asked.

DeMonte pointed to them by his bed-side. The hunter took them up, and observing that they were of superior workmanship, seemed pleased, and remarked—"Your highness will have to use your sword freely to-day on Delhi skins!"

A few horsemen now passed along in the street below. Amongst them were three men of the 3rd cavalry, in uniform; and Kazim Ali recognised our old friend Afzul Khan as one of the party: he had mounted a green turban, and was greatly excited.

"It does not appear to me," said Kazim Ali, "that your highness will to-day have any orderly horseman excepting myself."

"What, have you got a horse?" said the Collector.

"Yes; I knocked a useless fellow off it!"

DeMonte was now dressed, and the crowd which passed under the window became every moment more angry.

The hunter went up close to DeMonte, arranged his sword-belt, and placing his hand gently on the Collector's heart, said—"How cool you Feringhees keep your hearts—mine would be more troubled at the prospect of killing a deer!"

The storm was increasing every moment.

"You must make yourself look a little more Mahomedan to-day," said Kazim Ali, as he tied a turban round the Collector's head.

The tide of men flowed on impetuously down the street, and it was evident, from the sounds which reached the Collector's ears, that the Feringhee rule was no longer in favour.

"Now mount!" said the hunter.

DeMonte was on his bay Arab in a moment, and the hunter had mounted a large grey stud-bred horse. After a few instructions to the servants, he said—"Draw your sword, and use it freely: Delhi people do not like cold steel!" His own sword glistened in the sun.

"Now for a dash," called out the hunter, as the two adventurers emerged from a side alley, which was connected with the courtyard of the Collector's Delhi house. They were soon in the main street. On looking down it for a moment, to the right, in the direction of the palace, shots were heard, and shouts; a loud buzz spoke of the presence of thousands. The Bank was in flames; it was on the opposite side of the road. The horses' heads were at once turned to the left. Some one attempted to seize the reins of Kazim Ali's horse: he at once brought down his sword with telling effect. The crowd gave way, and the horses were urged along at a brisk pace. The Kotwalee showed evident signs of its nujeebs being disorganised: there was a general call for the Kotwal, who had hid himself in some snug corner.

A party of horsemen were now coming up from the rear, and another party, of which Afzul Khan seemed to

be the leader, was advancing from the front. Our friends were therefore between two enemies, and in the greatest possible danger. But a fresh cause of anxiety arose when matters appeared as bad as they could well be: a young English girl appeared on the opposite side of the road, and called loudly for help: her white dress was stained with blood, and her golden hair sparkled in the sun in disordered tresses. DeMonte and the hunter checked their horses, and there seemed to be nothing left for the three fugitives but a violent death. At this very moment there was a stir from the rear—confusion, neighing, kicking, and biting; for a fine grey Arab dashed along: throwing his head first to the right and then to the left, his eyes anxiously searched every face; his forelegs were raised high in the air as he cleared his way. As soon as he saw the young lady he neighed, and became passive as a lamb. She mounted the animal with an elastic spring, and the crowd seemed touched by the scene.

The three fugitives now pressed on their steeds; the way was blocked up by Afzul Khan's party. Kazim Ali dashed into it, and brought a horseman to the ground with a stroke of his sword: this made an opening for the young lady, who urged on her horse—he kicking at all who came near him.

Afzul Khan had raised his sword, and would in a moment have brought it down on the head of the young Englishwoman, had not a beautiful young girl with the quickness of thought collected a handful of dust and dashed it into his face. He was blinded for some minutes, and the young lady passed on safely.

“Well done, Nirgis!” cried out Kazim Ali, who had looked back at that moment.

DeMonte's blood was now well up, and he made his sword tell with fearful effect on three horsemen who opposed him. The crowd drew back, and cried out—"See how the Feringhee fights!"

The party from the rear had now closed up, and it was evident that "speed" must be the watchword. The young lady, calling to her horse, dashed along with the speed of the wind, closely followed by DeMonte and the hunter. One more danger was to be dreaded—all was lost if the Lahore Gate was shut. It was open, and the three fugitives were saved! As they passed under it, a fearful explosion in the city shook it to its very foundations—the defence of the magazine had immortalised the name of Willoughby!

How pleasant the fresh air seemed to our fugitives beyond the city walls!—how placidly the ringdoves echoed forth their mournful ditties!—how sweet the scent of the flowering shrubs and trees! The pursuit is over; the scene has changed. All pulled up about half a mile from the city gate. The hunter was the first to speak: "Your highness is as clever with a sword in the Silver Street of Delhi as with a spear in our jungles. I hope the Misse Baba is not hurt?"

"Oh, no!" said the young lady.

It was not a time for speeches; so DeMonte, after having been warmly thanked by the young lady, was content to ride silently by her side. The hunter, having been lost in thought for a few moments, said—"We had better push on, for bad news spreads like wildfire in Hindostan: by to-morrow morning the whole country will be up. We shall gain your honour's house in a couple of hours."

The hunter proved a true prophet, for the young lady was handed into DeMonte's drawing-room just as the two hours had expired.

The three fugitives were for the present safe; but the storm of rebellion was rolling on like some black cloud raised by the vernal winds, which clothes the landscape in utter darkness so suddenly as to conceal the sun in one of the brightest days of May.

CHAPTER XV.

KAZIM ALI, as soon as he had seen all safe at DeMonte's bungalow, again mounted his horse, which he had tied to a tree in the compound, at a respectful distance from the hoozoor's house. As he rode along, several friends called out—"You are in luck to-day, riding instead of walking!"

Kazim Ali smiled, and replied—"Men fall and rise rapidly in Hindostan!"

As he entered the scrai he called to a man, and said—"Look well after this horse."

The inn-keeper spoken to at once took charge of him.

Kazim Ali now sat down on a charpoy, and ordered his dinner to be got ready as soon as practicable. A few friends had collected about him; he caught hold of one, and putting his hand playfully on his waistband, said—"You must earn a purse full of money!"

The young man laughed, and said—"Money does not fall like rain!"

Kazim Ali, having fixed his eye on four stout young men, of good family, though poor, informed them that

they were engaged by the Saheb Collector to escort a young lady to Agra; that their remuneration would be fifty rupees each, for the lady's father was "a most powerful Feringhee, ruling over thousands of Hindoo-stances, with a treasury full of gold mohurs!"

Swords were soon procured, together with four good matchlocks, and the five friends proceeded to a banker's house, and drew his ruth out of its house. Upon seeing this, the banker called out—"By whose order do you seize my ruth?"

"By that of the Saheb Collector."

At these words the banker called Kazim Ali aside, and said—"Take a gift of five rupees, and release my ruth."

Kazim Ali answered—"Your bullocks are faster than any I know in these parts. I have long admired them—look how sleek they are: they will now have the pleasure of conveying a Feringhee lady to Agra, instead of dragging about a family of fat Hindoo women!"

The banker, hearing these words, fell at Kazim Ali's feet, clasped them, placed his turban on the ground, and implored him to take a gift of twenty rupees.

Upon Kazim Ali refusing, the banker rose, and, knocking his head against the wall, inflicted a severe wound. He then ran down the bazar, calling out—"Justice, Company Bahadoor!—Justice, DeMonte Saheb! Kazim Ali the hunter has plundered my house, insulted my women, and wounded me most severely! Oh, oh!—I am a dead man!"

Kazim Ali cared not a straw; the ruth moved on quite jollily, and drew up at DeMonte's door.

A few words of explanation convinced the young lady

of the propriety of proceeding to Agra : signs of an unusual excitement were already appearing—a man on a camel passed by the house at no great distance, calling out to all—"Beware ! Beware !"

Kazim Ali suggested a change of clothes, which was readily effected, a suit belonging to the Khansamah's wife having been borrowed. The four attendants on the ruth were specially warned by DeMonte to be very careful.

Few words were spoken by the young lady as she struggled into the ruth. She however shook DeMonte by the hand, and said—"A thousand thanks ; I cannot say all I feel. May we meet in happier days !"

The bullocks jogged on, and Kazim Ali said to the four attendants—"The Feringhee lady will remain behind the purdah ; you will, if challenged by any one, demand a free passage for Her Highness Mumtaz Mahal, a favourite Begum of the Refuge of the World, who is on her way to Mecca, to offer up prayers for the good cause !"

As the ruth departed in a cloud of dust, DeMonte said to Kazim Ali—"But how can we trust these four men ?"

"I have vowed on the Koran," said Kazim Ali, "to kill any one who may prove false to the young lady, whether a Mahomedan or Feringhee rule continues in Hindoostan. We understand these things better in the East than your highness' Government. But I have no fear for these four men's fidelity—they are of my own clan, and would not dare to prove false to me."

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was evident to all that DeMonte's authority as a hakim in the district of Rampoor was at an end: he gave his orders, and a slave with folded hands received them;—not for a moment intending to comply with them, but merely to trace the train of thought in his master's mind. DeMonte was now sensible of the great personal inconvenience of being attached to a falling cause, and of finding that men supposed to be faithful only a few days before, now sat in his verandah and smoked their hubble-bubbles whilst indulging in treasonable conversation. The crowd of men who lived so lately on hope, and, dressing in white clothes, saluted DeMonte as he went to court day by day, had disappeared: they had taken off their white apparel, packed it carefully up, concealed their English chits, or torn them up; cut their hair, or beards, so as to change their appearance, and set off for Delhi;—"For," said one of them, a poet in his way, who used to compose epic poems, of which DeMonte was the hero, "when the leaves begin to fall from a full-blown rose, who cares to pluck it?" Still, a few bold spirits were staunch, and DeMonte resolved to hang on to his post to the last moment; to wait, in short, for the chapter of accidents. It was now the evening of the 15th of May, and the sun was about to sink below a troubled political horizon; but DeMonte was hardly aware of the subtle feeling of treason, which was every moment taking more and more hold of the Native mind. Some discussed whether it would not be better to at once attack and put an end to

DeMonte, and proclaim the rule of the Great Mogul. As a man was loudly advocating this course to a crowd which sat under a shady tree, a mild Hindoo joined the party, and listening to the orator for some time, said—"Let caution be our guide; the Collector Saheb is armed. Let him go to sleep; we will then set fire to his bungalow, and burn the British lion out of his den. It would be a pity to have loyal lives lost the first day of a royal rule."

This was Ram Sookh's advice, and all warmly applauded it. Ram Sookh now advanced with caution to DeMonte's house, and found the Collector alone. Standing before his hakim with folded hands, and in appearance of profound respect, Ram Sookh thus spoke:—"Your slave, this miserable piece of dirt, has come to carry your highness to a place of safety; your honour cannot linger here any longer."

DeMonte, after a few minutes' conversation with Ram Sookh, began to see the net of treason which was spread out before him, and to realise that flight was the only course open, unless, indeed, he selected the alternative of being quietly murdered in his bed. He therefore said—"Make all arrangements, Ram Sookh."

Ram Sookh proceeded to a grove about a quarter of a mile off, and returned in about fifteen minutes with five riding camels. A few words to DeMonte's servants brought his horses ready saddled to the door. DeMonte mounted his bay Arab, and the four horses were made over to staunch attendants. A servant was told off to each of the camels; the grooms were furnished with small ponies, which Ram Sookh had also thoughtfully procured.

"Your slave," said Ram Sookh, "represents that money is needed; also a little brandy: this miserable bit of dirt could stow away a few gold mohurs in its waistband!"

Writing materials, clothes, bedding, and money were packed on the camels, and then Ram Sookh disappeared for a few minutes, to return an altered man. He had girded on a sword, thrust a pair of pistols into his waistband, and assumed the dress of a Rajpoot of the states: a pair of long boots concealed the legs of the miserable bit of dirt, and a capacious turban was twisted round his head, instead of the stiff, closely-folded, Delhi head-dress. Ram Sookh now gave his orders with precision and distinctness, and all set off in various directions; but not before the orator of the tree, seeing that his prey was about to escape him, besought DeMonte "not to forsake his faithful flock of sheep."

Ram Sookh, with a sharp glance at him, remarked—"The Collector is going to look for fresh pastures for them: on his return I know who will require to be hanged!"

DeMonte was accompanied by Ram Sookh and the hunter, who appeared to know the latter, for he salaamed to him, saying—"After all, hunting up men in a jungle is more remunerative than following a poor deer!"

Ram Sookh replied meekly—"One good deed rendered to a Saheb can brush away many small offences committed to support a family's respectability in this wicked world?"

As DeMonte's party passed the scrai in which the treasure of the district had been placed for assumed

security, under a guard of Native infantry, the remaining portion of which regiment had mutinied at Delhi, the sentinel called out—"Who comes there?" "Friend!" said Ram Sookh. "Pass, friend," was the rejoinder. Ram Sookh now turned round, and said—"My salaam to the jemadar, and tell him to look up into the skies, and search for the noose above his head!" A shot was the reply. Ram Sookh rode on quite contented, and remarked to Kazim Ali—"May the enemies of our Government perish, and be wafted away like the smoke from yonder musket!"

But the discharge of the musket aroused the guard, and the result was a volley, which, however, did no harm.

"A salute in favour of your honour!" quietly remarked Kazim Ali.

Ram Sookh, from the top of his camel, now chimed in—"These are exactly the times which lead to coronets for masters, and jageers for poor faithful followers!"

At a signal from Ram Sookh, the whole party now collected, and moved on in silence, a man having been specially told off as a guide. The sky behind was soon lit up with numerous fires; shots were mingled with shouts; the demon of disorganisation had been let loose. "Thus it is," said Ram Sookh, "that ignorant men plunder their own country, which prospered so well under an English rule."

"When," remarked Kazim Ali, "poor moonshees were forced to levy contributions to sustain their famishing families!"

DeMonte asked Ram Sookh how far he proposed to travel during the night.

“As day dawns, we shall, I trust, be in safe quarters, about fifty miles from this; we are well mounted.”

DeMonte now felt the relief of being released from false men, and realised that he was entering on a fresh existence: a few hours before, he had reckoned on death as almost certain. How soon the scene shifts as hope again asserts its immortal sway. After riding pretty sharp for a couple of hours, the party heard a man singing, as he leant over the ramparts of Islamabad—

“Why so dark and dreary?”

Ram Sookh called out — “Zalim, Zalim—come down and welcome your friends!”

In a few moments the gate of the city was opened, and Zalim ran up to Ram Sookh’s camel, saying—“I knew it was all over at the station; I could see the light as it burnt.”

“You will follow the Collector?” inquired Ram Sookh.

“Of course, as soon as my pony is ready, and I have made over charge.”

Zalim now paid his respects to DeMonte, who had recently advanced him to the office of jemadar, and asked permission to quit his post after naming his successor. DeMonte readily assented, and Zalim gave his orders to his successor:—“You will carefully shut the gates of the city until this disturbance is over: be careful not to admit any of the king’s party; fire at once on all suspicious characters. Tell the Punchayet to get supplies ready for four *lal coatees*, two regiments of lancers, and four *topekhanes*; together with fowls and eggs for the Collector Saheb, who has been appointed the Governor-General’s Naib in these parts. Tell the *tehsildar*

not to oppress or vex the villagers of: Neemka, which I am sure the Saheb Collector intends to give me in jageer!" The pony or animal now neighing loudly, was mounted. Zalim was in the best of spirits.

As day dawned, an old Fakir, in orange-coloured clothes, welcomed DeMonte: a charpoy was got ready, a boy with a hand punkah stood by the head of the bed, and in a few moments the Collector was fast asleep. "A good sign," said the hunter; "it proves that we are all trusted. I dislike a mind troubled with doubt!"—"Of which the Collector has not a spark," said Ram Sookh. A guard was set by the old Fakir, the horses and camels were well cared for, and in an hour or so the whole of the party was fast asleep, excepting the khidmutgar, who made arrangements for breakfast. Ram Sookh and the hunter took up their position close to the Collector's bed, their arms all ready for use.

But we must take a brief glance at the orator and his party. DeMonte's bungalow was soon crowded with plunderers; there was a general scramble. One man slipped into the bed, and cried out—"Oh, how luxurious the English are!" Another began to caper about, having tumbled half a bottle of brandy down his throat. Others slipped their feet and legs into the Collector's shoes and boots. The Collector's clothes gave infinite pleasure. The orator put on a hat, and sat down on a chair, declaring that he would "transact business in the name of the King." To this the man who had consumed the brandy strongly objected, and taking a sword from a bystander, struck the orator a severe blow, which drew blood, saying—"I am Lord Saheb here!" But a fresh troop of plunderers from the surrounding village

now rushed in, and there was a general fight, which would have continued all night, had not the man who had indulged in the spirits fired the thatch of the bungalow, saying—"How wonderfully wise the Saheb log's beverage makes one! This is the only way of clearing out the mob, and securing the silver, which I am told is packed in the box close to where the orator sat with the Saheb's hat on!"

How soon the evil passions of a barbarous race exhibit themselves, when the restraints of law are withdrawn. The crowd dispersed, and two watchers sat by the embers of the falling bungalow—one, the man who had drunk the brandy, the other, the Collector's English bull-dog, who looked on with great wonder, his large head slightly turned on one side. At last, the man ventured into the skeleton of the bungalow very carefully, and groped on the ground for the silver. As he grasped some half melted piece of plate, he felt a twinge at his throat: the bull-dog had, faithful to his charge, seized the wise man of brandy. A desperate struggle took place: "Let go, you dog of a Feringhee!" But no; the dog held on, true to his English blood: there was now a fearful gurgling, and at last the dog relaxed his hold—the man was dead. The dog sat down on his haunches inquiringly: at last, feeling certain that the thief could do no more harm, he sought out his accustomed place, and went to sleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER breakfast, on the day of his arrival at the Fakir's hut, DeMonte sat somewhat listlessly, conjecturing what the future would bring forth. He was not allowed to sit still long, for Ram Sookh made his appearance, dressed in a suit of pure white, with a Delhi turban on his head, an inkstand and paper in his hand. He made his obeisance to the Collector, and represented that perhaps it would be the huzoor's pleasure to transact a little business.

"Not much to-day, I fear," said DeMonte.

"Perhaps the huzoor would like to dismiss the heads of his office who have proved to be nimuk harams, and supply their places by an honest devoted slave?" suggested Ram Sookh.

"Yes, yes ; I appoint you as my revenue sheristedar : write the order."

Ram Sookh folded his paper, tested his pen on the thumb nail of his left hand, and wrote:—

"Proceedings before Mr. DEMONTE, Collector of the Zillah of Rampoor (may his star rise higher, and shine brighter, day by day!)—16th May, 1857.—Fakht.

"Be it known to all men, that Ram Sookh, a well-wisher of the British Government, is appointed Revenue Sheristedar in this district, in the place of a Nimuk Haram, whose name it is not even proper to mention.—*Fakht.*"

DeMonte signed the precious document, and on its

strength Ram Sookh drew out the special purwanah addressed to himself, which was signed in due form. He then placed the purwanah on his head, and fell at the Collector's feet. Clasping them, he said—"Your Highness is my only *wasila* (aid)!"

He was gently raised by DeMonte, with assurances of future protection. Hearing these grateful words, Ram Sookh rose, and again made suggestions—*1st*, that purwanahs or injunctions should be issued to the chief men of the district to be staunch; *2nd*, that insidious letters should be addressed to the chief men at Delhi, &c., so as to sow distrust amongst them—apparent answers to letters already received;—"For," said Ram Sookh, "should any of your own subjects turn traitors, your honour's injunctions will be strong proof against them—it will make them uncomfortable to be reminded of loyalty; and as to the Delhi people, it is an old Native rule of diplomacy to sow distrust amongst your enemies. And if this slave may be allowed to point out a road to your honour, it would be as well to write to the Lieutenant-Governor of Agra, that mighty Lord Saheb, and tell him what you have done in strong terms; the number of guns you have taken, the thousands you have slain, and the cause of your retreat. The Lord Saheb will publish the good news on the spur of the moment, and then no one will question its accuracy hereafter?"

DeMonte agreed to the two first propositions, but objected to the last portion of Ram Sookh's programme, who sighed as he wrote out the orders, saying—"Oh! how lamentable it is to see an English gentleman refuse to climb the tree of good fortune, and pick the glittering

fruit which grows on it: what a troublesome, what an evil thing it is to have too much of a conscience!—Alas! alas!”

Ram Sookh, however, wrote on, hour after hour. The sun was setting as all the papers were ready for despatch, messengers having been arranged for by Kazim Ali.

“Copy of General Injunction.”

“The Saheb Collector, strong in Ikbāl, confident of treading his enemies under his feet, calls on you to be very loyal, very firm; and to fix your eyes steadily on the large European force which is assembling: like a little white cloud, it will rise, and rise, and cover the whole of Hindoostan. Be very circumspect!”

The letters to the Delhi people need not now be read out publicly, for the runners are impatient to depart. Ram Sookh thus addressed them:—“As you run along, you will cry out—‘Great is the Ikbāl of the Company Bahadur, in having such a servant as the Collector Saheb! He has already an army with him of ten guns, two thousand sowars, and five pultuns, of which three are Europeans!’ “Look,” cried Ram Sookh, “you see this force in camp: you see how powerful the Saheb Collector is? As you see, so you will be paid!”

The runners at once cried out—“Oh! Ram Sookhjee, we see at least twenty thousand men!”

“Enough!” said Ram Sookh, with great gravity, as he avoided the dust stirred up by the runners. “The fear of this imaginary force will keep us secure for at least fifteen days; after that we must again put our hands into the purse of invention, and draw out the coin

of contrivance. Oh! how happy is the Collector to possess a slave with brains like mine; and how happy I am in the rebellion's having dissipated the little cloud which the Thuggee Department was raising most perversely against me for a few innocent attempts to raise money on the highway! Zalim, Zalim—we shall be pillars of the state before we die, and leave to our children a competency, with documents proclaiming us well-wishers! What a very fortunate event this rebellion has been to me!—Ram! Ram!”

There is a great difference between incarceration in a jail as an abettor of dacoits, and the honoured position of Native adviser to a Collector, even when in distress.

CHAPTER XVIII.

As Nirgis returned to the palace by the way of the Lahore Gate, after her adroit effort to assist DeMonte, she was a sympathiser with the English cause: her heart beat with indignation when she thought of the enormities which had been perpetrated under the flimsy garb of a royal cause; and she almost resolved to turn her back for ever on the palace and its inmates. But she checked the intention as impossible in the present state of the country outside Delhi, where the plundering tribes had risen at a moment's notice, and added considerably to the general confusion and perplexity. Then the young dancer's thoughts wandered off to Meerut, to Captain L'Adone: had he escaped or not? But when she thought of the day when the Captain first met her

sight, mounted on his splendid black Arab, she rejected the idea with scorn of his having been taken unawares : she made up her mind that she should soon see him enter the city in triumph, with his regiment, the 6th Carabineers. As Nirgis entered her own room, her mother caught her in her arms, and said—"Why will my lovely daughter wander about in the sun, and burn her face as black as one of the kala log's? Sit down on your charpoy whilst I shampoo your feet. - What beautiful feet!—they were never made to walk with. Your sherbet is quite cold ; here, drink some. What a fearful day!—what is the world coming to?"

Thus Diljan chattered on, and her daughter slept the sleep of youth. It was not until the sun was risen on the following day that she awoke. She felt languid and dejected, and the idea struck her, for the first time in her life with any force, that the events of no one day are the same as those of bygone days. All is change : we too change, hour by hour, minute by minute ; our ideas are not the same ; our feelings, our hopes, our fears. Some days we make rapid intellectual strides, on others we droop and retrograde, like some frail plant, burnt up and withered by a midday sun. An hour or so before, Nirgis had entered by the Lahore Gate. Englishmen with anxious countenances had passed under it, two severely injured ; in a short space of time the assassins' murderous hands had perpetrated some of the most dastardly deeds on record. In a few months more, the gallant brother of one of the victims was the first, in the flush of victory, with our gallant troops, under this very gate ; and again, as we mounted on one of the defences outside the Lahore Gate, to gaze

over the assembled multitude, we saw India's Viceroy enter the palace by the same gate—the reward for anxious days and nights spent in toil in his country's cause. A few more years sped on, and we heard the minute guns above us tongue forth the news that a Canning had passed away, worn out with toil, watching for an unclouded horizon in Hindoostan; for, entrusted with a sacred charge, he feared to give his gracious Queen a moment's pang, by quitting India's shores too soon. Thus noble spirits live and pass away—the brilliant and glorious monuments of happy England, which she shows proudly to the supporters of a royal cause who can only offer to their selected sovereign hands dyed with the blood of Englishwomen and children!

But the veil as yet hung thickly and closely over the future; Nirgis saw none of these things: to her mind, the present was enough to occupy her thoughts. Thus time passed uneasily, fitfully; there seemed no bright spot in the horizon of futurity. But mortal eyes are weak and dim. Soon it became known that English captives had arrived in the palace, and that they were placed under a guard; and it was also rumoured that a murderous crew was urging the King of Delhi to order them forth to immediate execution—men, women, and children; there was to be no pity. Nirgis set out on an errand of mercy. She found the captives serene and calm; the children playing about, as if nothing unusual was about to happen. But one fair girl seemed like a vision from above, so contented and so serene; she seemed to have but a fragile hold on earth. Her hair was golden, her eyes blue, her dress as white as the driven snow. With the permission of the guard, Nirgis

went up to her and took her hand. She smiled, but did not speak. Thus the girls of two races sat together: who shall say which possesses the greatest beauty—the girl of the East or West? It seemed to Nirgis that the fair captive did not understand a word of Hindustanee—and so it was: she had come from a far country, and was suddenly overwhelmed and entrapped by the snares of rebellion. The others looked on with awe and wonder; still the English girl spoke not—she seemed not to belong to this callous earth. But as the other captives looked on her long and ardently, she seemed to point to something unseen, with a thin glittering crook she held in her hand. Thus time rolled on, and the King, urged by evil councillors, signed the fatal warrant in thin pale letters on the face of a petition. There were cheers and shouts, an infuriated mob rushed in, and on the 16th May, 1857, forty-three captives were slain in cold blood. No one dared to strike the girl with the golden hair; she still smiled on. Several rushed on her, but she lifted up the glittering crook, as a shepherd would defend his flock from a troop of ravenous wolves, and all drew back. Nirgis gazed on the girl of the golden hair with wonder and amazement. The spirits of all had passed away; still the girl leant upon her crook, and looked at Nirgis. The air was now charged with dust—a still small breeze sprang up, the precursor of a storm. On, on it came, with frantic fury. In a moment more all would be gloom and darkness. The English girl stepped in between darkness and light, and, taking Nirgis's hand, kindly kissed it. The storm rolled on. As it subsided, Nirgis was alone: the bright-

haired English girl—where was she? Have we not the assurance, “As thy day so shall thy strength be?”

It was soon rumoured that the death of the English captives would bring ruin on the city, and all knew that a great national sin had been committed. As Zoak heard the narrative of the events of the day, he quietly remarked—“The day is lost; I said so before! Who was this English girl with her glittering crook? A spirit from the realm above, sent to gather Christian sheep into the general fold!”

CHAPTER XIX.

AN evening or so after the 16th of May, Nirgis was sitting listlessly in her room, when a troop of slave-girls burst into it, headed by Rosebud and Heart's-delight. They sat down in a ring, and, clapping their hands, all called out for riddles and fun. “You must not mope,” said Rosebud; “it spoils the beauty. I give the first riddle—

“*Riddle.*—My home is Khorassan; my throne Tajara. I am half at Neemli; half at Barah Jheer. As you stand on Kote Kasim's Bund, you will scream; if you travel over the sand of Patowdie, you will be thrown down and finished?—Now what is it?” cried Rosebud. All racked their brains in vain. “Do you give it up?”

“No!” said a man's voice outside the room—“It is Cold!”

“Well done, old man!” cried Rosebud: “you may sit at the door and answer those riddles we cannot.”

It was now Nirgis's turn; she gave her riddle:

“ *Riddle*.—I want money from a fakeer, I want sugar from a serpent’s mouth ; I want feathers from a spider’s web ; from a female mosquito I want a male lion !”

“ Well, you have puzzled us all,” called out the girls : “ give something more easy ; we have come to be merry, not to wrinkle our foreheads with thought.”

Rosbud looked at the old man, and called out—
“ Quick, old man ; give the meaning ?”

“ It is,” said the old man, “ this—Knowledge : the labour of acquiring it is bitter ; when gained it is as sugar ; the soul is as light as a feather to a man’s body, and is but as a spider’s web. The last portion of the riddle is answered by Resolution.”

All the girls clapped their hands. One ran up to the old man, and patted him on the back, saying—“ May I never sit on the throne of Delhi if this is not a clever old man !”

Some one now called out—“ Who are worldly men ?”
All at once answered—“ The people of the Deccan.”

“ Whose is wisdom ?”—“ The heritage of the Ferin-
ghee !”

“ Where do we find fools ?”—“ In the Punjab !”

“ Perhaps all Punjabees are not fools : I will give you a saying from that country,” said the old man.

Old man’s fun.—“ He who has given has sown ; he who has eaten has profited Nanuk ; he who has closed his eyes has parted with all.”

One of the young girls now ran up to the old man, and threatened him with her slipper, which she held in her hand, saying—“ Take care how you spoil our fun with your gloomy old Punjab sayings !”

"Well," said the old man, smiling, "I will give you another riddle, and then be off home.

"*Riddle*.—What is that which has never been in Persian; which has never been found in Toorki—I hesitate to pronounce it in Hindee: let's see who will find it out?"

"Why, Looking-glass, of course, you foolish old man!" cried Rosebud: "Were you born yesterday, to put such a simple riddle to the king's slave-girls? Get you gone! What is your name?"

As the old man rose, he made a bow, and replied—"I am indeed very old: some call me Zaffir; by some I am called Bahader Shah!"

The girls now laughed outright, as the old man disappeared. Suddenly a light burst on all: it was the King of Delhi in disguise!—and all felt what a scrape they were in. Nirgis, however, assured all by saying—"The King is not angry; he probably did not know how to pass his time; so, hearing our merry-making, was only too happy to join us. But, ladies, here is sherbet, which my mother has made, together with a few cakes; we will not lose our appetite because the King has slipped in on us by stealth.

There was a deal of sipping and chatting, of tittle-tattle and laughter, long after the evening gun had warned all to go to bed; but none dared to molest the palace slave-girls.

CHAPTER XX.

THE mutiny of the sepoy army of Bengal was so sudden and unexpected as almost to paralyse the Indian Government. It seemed so strange that the Great Mogul should, as if by magic, be again clothed with the imperial purple. It was very evident to a casual observer that Government did not understand the feelings of sympathy which still drew a nation on towards the throne of Delhi, which was occupied by a king who could boast of the reverse of the speech of Themistocles, when asked to touch a lute at a feast—"I cannot fiddle," said he, "but I can make a small town a great city." One man, a statesman of no mean capacity, who had passed his early life amongst our conquering camps, was, however, fully aware of the dangerous prestige of the King of Delhi. We allude of course to Lord Metcalfe. This able architect of a portion of our Indian empire was also fully aware of the weakness of its foundation. He clearly saw that we required a large increase to our European forces ; but then the old question of finance at once checked all idea of reform. Metcalfe had seen during his career how soon Natives fall away from a cause which is not undoubtedly in the ascendant : if a doubt be thrown out as to ultimate success, the hearts of mercenaries are at once chilled. Metcalfe had had practical illustrations of his views both as regards Bhurtpore and the Nepal war, which tested how little Natives can be calculated on in times of political difficulty. A mercenary's object is to draw pay and live ; the British soldier is obedient to the call of his country,

and the natural promptings of his own honest lion heart. Another man was equally sensible of the insecurity of our position in the East: Sir Charles Napier constantly dwelt on the subject; but the evil was too deeply rooted to be eradicated, except by the sharp treatment of the knife, which was required to cut wide and deep. Our empire in the east had been on the brink of ruin on many occasions prior to 1857; and if any one will study Indian history with any degree of attention, he will find that whenever the times were peculiarly hard there was a disposition on the part of the Native soldiers to be mutinous, and to avoid serving the state any longer. The arrears on account of pay, during our early conquests, was a constant source of anxiety, so as to render it often doubtful whether the proper course would not be to fight our mercenaries first, our enemies afterwards. Whilst we fought our way to the north, the Calcutta clique were always parading the poverty of the exchequer before the ambitious general. Thus our wars wanted a finish, which they otherwise often would have received had generals been allowed to carry out their views *in extenso*.

We came to India as a poor money-making people, and the Court was always insisting on good dividends, which the ambitious servants of the Company sadly curtailed by their love of conquest; but having acquired an acre of land in Hindoostan, the question was, shall we defend it or not. The resolution taken, conquest followed as a matter of course.

The Indian mercenary is but too often a summer bird: he flies like the swallow from the inclement season of winter, but as the season is auspicious, he

whirls about, and twitters cheerily. The character of Natives is essentially treacherous; many of the Emperors of Hindoostan rose and fell as if by magic; their object, therefore, was to secure a few faithful troops, on whom implicit reliance could be placed.

When the rebellion broke out, our Native army was a clan army, excepting the irregular cavalry; it was almost totally without education; the tie which bound it to Government was pay. Any order which affected one corps at once vibrated through the whole army—there was a buzz of discussion from one end of the land to the other. Those who were sharper than their fellow-soldiers saw the strength of the Native army, and determined that one day the struggle should be for increased pay and power, independent of all British control, which was often too strict, too material. The cartridge question at once lit up the horizon: religion, power, change—all longed for a new master. The one selected was the King of Delhi—old, incapable, and unable to wield a sceptre with any degree of kingly vigour. When the Native army mutinied, there was one thing it was ignorant of—the indomitable courage of the British soldier: this mistake in the calculation vitiated the whole of future independence.

The wheat was soon separated from the chaff, with tolerable accuracy; those Natives who remained staunch to our standard could be trusted. The loyalty of the Punjab irregular force deserves special notice, together with that of the Sirmoor Goorkhas, and other men of different corps who still were trustworthy.

There was at first serious doubt as to what ought to be done in so grave a conjuncture; but the mist cleared

off, and, true to British instinct, the order was—advance to Delhi.

A squadron of the 6th Carabincers was ordered with all speed to march from Meerut, and Captain L'Adone commanded one of the troops. He had, as Nirgis conjectured and hoped, escaped on the 10th May unhurt, and had rendered signal service to the state on that memorable occasion, by his vigour, promptness in acting, and great personal bravery.

Those who remembered the British army under Lord Gough's command, could hardly realise the fact that the compact body of well-disciplined, well-equipped men, now marching to Delhi, was really *the* army. Still so it was: it was the flower of the service—the white spot of manna in the wilderness, to which so many cast a hopeful eye. It needed that imagination should recall the days of Clive, when the 39th foot drew up confidently before the myriads of the Moslem force, and conquered. Whatever our position in the east is, or may be, we must never listen to timid councils: it is in resolution, and boldness in carrying out our plans, that we out-manceuvre the Indian hosts, led by men who hesitate, doubt, and thus lose the day.

CHAPTER XXI.

As soon as it was known in the bazars of Delhi that a British force was actually marching towards that city, the scale which was weighed down so deeply by the prestige of the kings became a little lighter; people:

began to doubt. Soon countenances clearly indicated to which party a man belonged; there was as great a difference as between a Cavalier and Puritan when it was contemplated to bring back the king. When the news of the advance of the English was communicated to the King of Delhi, he was as thunderstruck as the barber to whom the stranger narrated the sickening news of the total destruction of the Athenian force at Syracuse. The King turned round, and said to Zeenut Mahal hurriedly—"Behee, the English have collected a fresh army; what a gem the Akal Farang is!"

The Native diplomatist now began to flutter about, and his emissaries were constantly on the wing, slipping in and out of Delhi with mysterious slips of paper concealed in all imaginable places. Fakcers were as common as oysters in the Haymarket on theatre nights. The Native diplomatist sent a message to Nirgis, asking her as a special favour to dance at his house.

When Nirgis asked Zeenut Mahal's permission, the Queen bit her lip, and said—"Yes, child, go by all means; but mind that the Native diplomatist does not get you into trouble. What a short-lived thing is popular favour!"

The house of the diplomatist was large and airy; the gate strong, and securely bolted and barred. Peeping first through a small crevice, the diplomatist then readily admitted Nirgis. She soon became aware that dancing was not to be the object of the visit; for the diplomatist, begging that she would be seated in a snug corner, opened the conversation by saying that "Fidelity is a jewel of great value, which always hangs very gracefully on the brow of a young girl. It is difficult to find

a good master. We must exert ourselves in a good cause. See," said the cunning man, "that ant ascending the wall, with its small burden: it is but a little creature, yet it contributes its share to the general store. We must all do our utmost in these bad times. I know that you are a well-wisher of the English. News from the palace is required, together with a copy of the diary which is kept in the palace by a man who lives near your room."

Nirgis hardly knew what to answer him. She did not fancy the duty of playing spy upon those with whom she was living, and who treated her kindly. The diplomatist knew her thoughts at a glance, and helped on Nirgis's conscience by saying—"A Sahib has written to me. Let me see, what is his name?—L'Adone. He writes thus: 'Ask Nirgis the singer for *my sake* to get all the news from the palace in her power, and to send it to me through you.'"

The diplomatist was now silent, and looked at Nirgis, who was sorely perplexed. Her inclinations prompted her to at once acquiesce, but her heart told her that it was wrong to play false to her salt. She therefore answered—"Give my compliments to Captain L'Adone, and tell him I will report as far as my conscience will allow me."

At these words the diplomatist dropped his pen, turned pale, and exclaimed—"We live in evil days, when a dancing-girl talks of her conscience! Since I commenced my career, I never heard of such folly. But this is one of the refinements of education!"

Nirgis, now rising, placed her small hand on the diplomatist's shoulder, much to his disgust, and said—

“Oh! Meer Moonshee—after all I fear that you are but a wicked man.”

The diplomatist for once lost his tongue. As soon as the dancer disappeared, he threw off his turban and struck his head violently on the ground, exclaiming—“Fool that I am, to be outwitted by a chicken like this! What a cunning minx it is; how well she acts! What an idiot I am! Why did I not offer a large sum of money, and charge it, and something more, to the British Government?”

Nirgis went straight, on her return to the palace, and told all that had occurred to Zeenut Begum, who opened her eyes incredulously, as Nirgis gave an account of what had taken place. “What a clever creature it is!” thought the Queen. After a few minutes’ silence, Nirgis said—“I should like to give all news in my power to Captain L’Adone, but having eaten your Highness’s salt, I cannot betray you.”

Zeenut Mahal, penetrating as she was, knew not what to make of Nirgis. She gave her credit for guile and deceit, of which Nirgis had not an atom. At last, Zeenut Mahal said—“Whatever takes place inside the palace you may report, first showing your letters to me. As to the city news, you are welcome to it: if you do not give it, others will.”

Nirgis now thanked the Queen; but, looking into her face, calmly said—“Your Highness still distrusts me—but unjustly: I shall do whatever is my duty!”

Zeenut Mahal now laughingly said—“What do they say in the city about the English?”

“They say,” replied the dancer, that the English army is small, but very strong; that everything is as

regular as the call to prayer from the mosques of the faithful; that eating and drinking go on as usual; and they say ——”

“What?” said the Queen.

“I fear to repeat what I heard?”

“Never fear, but speak out,” said the Queen impatiently.

“They say,” replied Nirgis, “that an officer has sworn to take Delhi, and send off Bahader Shah and his favourite Queen in a cart, prisoners, to Rangoon!”

The Queen laughed heartily, and answered—“I suppose I shall not be forced to pay cart-hire for a trip against my will!”

CHAPTER XXII.

NIRGIS was full of spirits as she quitted the presence of the Queen, and at once proceeded to the house of the newswriter, who was busy preparing his newsletter for the durbar. For some time he hardly noticed the singer, who stood close to him: at last, looking up, he asked somewhat sharply—“What do you want?”

“I want you to do me a favour,” replied Nirgis.

“Favours are unprofitable things, unless paid for,” replied the newswriter.

Nirgis, nothing daunted, answered—“If paid for liberally, then there is no obligation.”

“None, none,” answered the newswriter; “what a clever girl it is!—how readily she understands that it is money which moves the wheels of state. You of course

want a copy of my newsletter. Rs. 5 is the charge for each day's news, when required, as I know you want it for foreign parts."

"Very well," said the singer; "I want back numbers."

"Of course, of course!—you require the thread of the narrative. You may, if you like, copy from these papers; they are in my handwriting." Nirgis took the bundle of papers, and pointing to where she lived, and mentioning her name, the newswriter at once knew that he was addressing a rising court favourite.

As soon as Nirgis had departed, the newswriter went to a shelf, took down a large book, looked at the index, turned up the appropriate heading, "Court Gossip," and entered in a clear hand—"Nirgis visited me to-day. Agreed to part with copies of my newsletters for foreign parts at Rs. 5 per copy. [*Memo.*—To look well after this girl: she is very beautiful; will probably rise high at court.] Doubtful whether this young girl is artless or very cunning. [*Memo.*—To present dais on fitting occasions."]

The newswriter having carefully stowed away his memo. book, sat down, and exclaimed thoughtfully—"What a rush there is on my newsletters! How the English Government will have to pay for them indirectly, and how they will be garbled! Why not address me direct, and husband the resources of the state; for is it not written—'Vast is the revenue of parsimony?' But I wish I could see my way clearly to the end of this strife; I could then write more comfortably;—for the English do everything thoroughly: they drill to perfection, they clear out towns with the broom of perfection,

and if they take Delhi, they will hang a good many rogues—to perfection. Perhaps I shall be treated roughly; but, to satisfy my mind, I will this evening consult Fazala the astrologer.”

Diljan did not know what to make of her daughter's anxiety to copy out papers; but she said nothing, except beseeching her not to inflame her eyes by too much reading or writing—“since,” said the prudent mother, “many a good match is won by a clear eye.”

Nirgis was for a moment irresolute: she doubted whether she should first copy out the diary or write her letter. The letter promised the greatest pleasure; so, nibbing her pen, and trying it on her nail, she selected a sheet of paper, manipulated and folded it into proper shape and consistency, and dipping her pen in the ink, made the all-important sign of “Allah!” She then wrote on fluently—

*“To His Highness Captain L'ADONE, Saheb Bahadoor,
a very Roostum in bravery, and very Nousherwan in
Council, Health and Safety!*

“YOUR slave has been informed by the diplomatist, with great skill of expression, that your honour requires Delhi news. A commission entrusted to one so humble confers a great obligation. The industry of the bee will not be wanting, combined with the sagacity of the lion. As a proof how soon the rose of endeavour is blooming, your slave forwards with due expressions of humility the accompanying diary of news. May the shield of good fortune protect you!

“MUSUMMAT NIRGIS.

“Delhi Palace, May 26th, 1857.”

The letter was duly folded up, and the diary commenced.

As Nirgis wrote on hour after hour, her mother watched her uneasily. At last she said—"Oh! my dear—this will never do. You must stop: your eyes are actually red!"

"Mother, I have finished!" said Nirgis, throwing down her pen: "let us have a cup of sherbet together."

NIRGIS's Copy of the Royal Diary.

"16th May.—Royal letters were addressed on this date to Mirza Khizar Sooltan, and other Royal Princes, and forty-three Christian prisoners were cruelly murdered inside the palace.

"17th.—Orders were issued to the commandants of regiments to preserve order in the city. Forms of seals were presented for acceptance, in which the King is styled Defender of the Faith.

"18th.—Mirza Jumma Bukht was invested with the office of Wuzceer; Mirza Mogul was appointed Commander-in-Chief; Mirza Abdool Hassan was appointed to command the regiment styled Runsect. Other appointments were also made—Mirza Soharab Hindiee to the Mapat Regiment; Mirza Khizar Sooltan to the Alexander Regiment; Mirza Abbas Bukkur to the Toorup Sowars. All were commanded to attend to the orders of these Chiefs.

19th.—Kanwur Ajeet Sing, the uncle of the Maharajah of Putteala, appeared, and gave a nuzzur. [*Memo. by newswriter.*—This news is false; inserted to suit diplomacy.]—Orders were issued to the Thanadars and

other officials to preserve order. Mirza Jumma Bukht was invested with the highest insignia of office.

“20th.—Mirza Mogul was directed to furnish a list of his men, with a view to their pay being distributed to them. Thanadars and Mohurirs were warned about keeping a strict watch, and reporting everything at the Kotwalee. Royal letters were addressed to several Chiefs to enlist men, &c. &c. Officers of the army reported that the news about the capture of the dumdumak (entrenchment) at Meerut was false, and requested that an attack might be organised on the place. It was consequently ordered that the matter should be referred to Mirza Mogul. Mirza Aboo Bukkur, on the stipulation that certain Chiefs were sent with him, amongst whom he named the hakeem (royal physician), guaranteed the reduction of the dumdumak and the destruction of the British force. Some of the Chiefs named, on hearing this news, were sorely perplexed. Some one, whilst attempting to carry off a small gun from Selimghur, was at once shot. Moulvie Mahomed Tuhak gave a futwa that it was contrary to orders to kill three women and a boy about whom he was consulted, but stated at the same time that they ought to be brought into the Mahomedan faith. Sounds of guns from the direction of Meerut was heard, and the sepoys at once got ready. Colonel Skinner's house was plundered. The Vakeel of Bulubghur represented that his master had sent fifty horsemen, and requested that the door of the city might be opened to them. He also stated that his master had made police arrangements as far as the door of the old fort. Instructions were given for the organisation of a system by which all crime would be prevented.

"21st.—Mahomed Saduk was appointed Thanadar of the Lahore Gate. Orders were addressed to the heads of neighbouring villages to preserve order. A petition was received from ——* asking for permission to appear. Ordered that he present himself. The Vakeel of Bulubghur stated that one hundred horse and foot had arrived. Ordered to encamp near the Shah Baree Tukyah. The Rajah of Bulubghur was directed to provide for the safety of Budderpoor, and then present himself. It was reported by the officers of the King's army that several tumbrils having been abstracted from the magazine, were being carried off towards Jhujjur. This gave rise to the rumour that there was collusion between the King's party and the English. It was stated that a Khutree had been wounded by a sepoy whilst disputing about a sword, and that a vegetable seller had also been wounded. Three or four Native writers were appointed to each regiment. At 3 o'clock, P.M., the Chief Eunuch, Mahboob Ali Khan, asked the King whether it was his intention to proceed to the Jumma Musjid next day. The reply was, that indisposition would prevent the King's attending prayers. An uneasy feeling was observable between Mahomedans and Hindoos.

"22nd.—Prayers were said in the Wooden Mosque. A Royal order was issued to Mirza Mogul about preservation of order in the city. A Royal order was issued to Mirza Mahomed Ali Beg on his being appointed to office, and was, on being sealed and signed, given to

* Where blanks are left, in consequence of altered circumstances, it has not been considered necessary to publish names.

him. An order was issued to the heads of villages to do their utmost to prevent plundering. It was reported that the Jullisur Regiment had arrived at the bridge of boats. This report, however, proved to be incorrect, for it was subsequently ascertained that only four companies stationed at Allyghur had reached Delhi. A party of infantry, cavalry, and guns were ordered to Rhotuck, to take charge of and bring the treasure of that district into Delhi. Abdool Samad Khan and Ibrahim Ali Khan, with one hundred sowars sent by the Nawab of Jhujjur, were reported to have arrived. Orders were issued to the chief men on the opposite side of the river Jumna to obey the orders of Wuleedad Khan. It was stated that Wuleedad Khan had arrived, and that there were fifty thousand rupees in the treasury.

"23rd.—Abdool Samad Khan, sent by the Nawab of Jhujjur, arrived. The following nuzzurs were presented :—Nawab of Jhujjur, 7 gold mohurs, 2 gold mohurs; Samad Khan, 1 gold mohur, 1 gold mohur; Tehsuldar of Bolundshur, 1 gold mohur. The Rajah of Bulubghur requested permission for his men to be allowed to come into the city armed. The Princes were directed to provide for the safety of the city. It was represented that a tumbril with treasure had been placed in the treasury.

"24th.—The grandson of the Newswriter of Hyderabad presented his nuzzur. A letter was addressed to the Princes to keep a watch over the state of the city. A reply was also sent to the Nawab of Jhujjur. An order was also issued for the appearance of the Rajah of Bulubghur, and Wuleedad Khan of Nalaghur, and Bahader Jung Khan. Wuleedad Khan having presented

himself, he was honoured with the gift of a shawl, and an acknowledgment of his services. Mirza Mogul was directed to order the officers of regiments to encamp outside the city, and it was directed that tents should be sent to the Edgar.

“25th.—Prayers were read in the Wooden Mosque, and a khilut was given to the Pesh Imam. A khilut was also presented to Mirza Khizar Sooltan, as Towlgut of Edgar. The Princes, together with the vakeels of distinguished Chiefs, presented their nuzzurs. The Kotwal was directed to keep a sharp look-out on the city. A camelman of the Rajah of Bulubghur spread the news of the approach of Europeans. The hands of the Toorup Sowars shook so violently that they could not put the bits into their horses’ mouths, and the infantry could not plant their feet firmly on the ground. The crowd, seeing this, called out—‘What a boasting!’ ‘What a falling off!’

“26th.—The Princes and officers were directed to look after the city. Five hundred Hindustani sepoy were placed in charge of the magazine. The following Royal order was addressed to Mirza Mogul:—On the very day of the arrival of the Toorup Sowars and regiments, they were clearly informed that His Highness did not possess treasure or property which could be applied to their wants, but His Highness’s life was in their hands; but the reply on hearing this message was—‘We will continue faithful.’ Upon this, orders were issued that the magazine and treasury should be guarded with due precaution. Now persons are in the habit of consulting their own pleasure, and putting up in the Dewan Khas, Dewan Am, and Mehtab Garden. As a

concession to excusable ignorance, my servants were told not to interfere, and I borrowed money to be expended in providing for these men. Time after time the strictest injunctions have been given against plundering in the city, but to no purpose. This state of things has continued uninterruptedly for sixteen days. It is true that the Dewan Khas and the Dewan Am have been vacated; still, as regards the city, our orders have not been attended to. We also directed that arms should not be worn inside the city, but without success. The chief bazars of the city have been shamelessly plundered. Evil disposed persons are in the habit of breaking into private houses, and plundering them, under the plea of searching for Europeans who may be concealed there. Horsemen are in the habitual practice of breaking into houses and carrying off horses. The sepoy and horsemen who had taken up their abode in the Hyut Buksh Garden, and Furash Khanah, have not obeyed the order to quit. These are places which Nadir Shah, Ahmed Shah, and Governor Generals refrained from entering on horseback. People at first assented to the control of the Princes. You have several times been directed to attend to my orders; but so far from doing so, you have not even condescended to hear them. In addition to these irregularities, officers of note, when they came into the Fort, used to dismount at the Dewan Am, but now people gallop their horses close to the Dewan Am. I have closed the door of the Dewan Am, and opened a side door; still the same thing continues—people come to the Dewan Am and Jillo Khanah on horseback, without their turbans. There is no semblance of respect. Officers of the army come into my presence

without hats or trowsers. This was not the state of things in the time of the English. People have plundered the stores from magazines, and emptied treasuries; and whilst retaining their plunder, they call out to me for pay. The actual number of men present with their colors is falsified, so as to enable them to draw excess pay. Goods are taken by force, and not paid for. I am unequal to describing the state of the city; outside of it hundreds are killed, inside thousands are plundered. The officers of Tehsuls and Thanas are not allowed to do their duty. We are surrounded with difficulty. If this state of things continues, how can supplies be procured, and how can the revenue be collected? All these things will end in the dissolution of the country and the destruction of its inhabitants. Every one flatters the soldiery, but to no purpose; whilst in the act of plundering, they try to pass off the blame on the servants of the King. In short, when looking at this turbulent army, I see no hope for the future amelioration of the Government, but increased confusion. Therefore His Highness, helpless and without a remedy, has resolved to devote the remainder of his life to religious exercises, and to abandon this shadow of an empire, which is but pain and grief. I will first take up my residence at the shrine of Kootub Saheb in the garb of a fakeer, and, having settled my affairs, depart for Mecca. Since the arrival of these people, they have not been interfered with, either by me, my servants, or the people of the city. We have not deserved to be thus rewarded. It is worthy of notice, that this army, which professes to have come to my aid, could not treat me worse were I their enemy. They ought to have conciliated my sub-

jects, to have kept me satisfied, and acted in unison with my servants. Call for all the officers of the army and ask them whether they are willing to serve me. Ask them whether they are willing to sign a paper to this effect, according to the form sent. I will then stipulate with them. They must make good arrangements. Three regiments must leave the city to-day. Those who have committed murders must be punished. and orders must be attended to. If not, I request a truce, and solicit permission to depart as a fakeer without being molested. Let them take possession of both palace and city. Former kings or rulers have never denied a truce to one craving for it, and have then ceased to trouble. You will speedily send a reply to these matters, and also an agreement, and not regard the matter as of trivial import. I am too weak to be subjected to excess of trouble. 'To protect subjects and to rule an army is no easy matter.'—The purport of this Royal mandate was read to all, and it was then published."

A trusty man of the diplomatist's was entrusted with the letter and diary, and was soon running along at the rate of five miles an hour to the post where a change had been arranged for. As the diplomatist read the letter and the diary, he was much struck with the style of writing adopted by Nirgis. "After all," said he, "how soon natural ability asserts its position in the world! Excepting myself, no one in my office could have turned out a more appropriate petition. How clever of the dancer to hoodwink the palace people, and obtain permission for the transmission of letters after their perusal by the King. But perhaps some plot is

springing up, of which I have not as yet secured even a thread ! This must be attended to. But the future—the future !—how will it turn out ? And I really embarked in the winning boat ? I must consult the astrologer Fazala, and see what good future he can promise me. Oh ! for the good old days, when I went to court regularly, worked hard, and in the evening found letters with pretty bags of gold mohurs awaiting my arrival. Now it is pay ! pay ! pay ! and no income—not even my monthly salary ! What if the English should lose the day ? Impossible !”

Still the frame of the diplomatist trembled ; his eye had lost some of its brilliancy, his spirits a good deal of their play ;—for in a losing game he saw poverty and death written clearly on the wall.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE East has always been celebrated for the skill which it has been supposed that its magicians have possessed of lifting up the veil from futurity. With the past and present, the searcher into futurity has nothing to do ; his arena is the dark inscrutable world, which is shaded from mortal eyes. Fazala’s ancestors had come into Hindoostan with the Emperor Humayoon ; that monarch, when in exile, frequently had recourse to a magician who had travelled from Damascus to the Persian capital, and became much attached to the royal wanderer when fortune was adverse to him. But the magician always used to say—“ You will again sit on the throne of

Delhi." Thus, a grant of land in perpetuity enabled the magician to live comfortably in imperial Delhi under the authority of the royal red seal. This sunnud was now held by Fazala, who was lineally descended from this very famous magician. But the labour in acquiring and retaining the knowledge of the occult sciences was enormous: few of the family were long lived, for a single thread lost, the whole fabric fell to pieces; the spirit would not reply to any one except he was a perfect master of his profession. Thus, whilst others slept, Fazala was keeping up his knowledge with the most inveterate and tenacious assiduity. His cellars were stored with gold and silver, still he was forced to be as attentive to his studies as a youth of twenty; for the magician was well aware that a free indulgence in the things of the world soon blunts the intellect. Fazala had no son; but a daughter, of exquisite beauty, as fair as a lily, aided him in his interpretations. She would, people said, inherit all the magician's untold wealth; but the magician knew better—for his insight into futurity told him that a dark heavy cloud hung over his house: whilst others imagined that the magician was a happy man, he envied the water-carriers in the street, as they bent under the weight of their water-bags, and, clinking their brass water-cups together, cried, "Drink pure water! drink! drink!" The knowledge of the future prevented Fazala's enjoyment of the present.

He was now engaged in a most laborious and harassing study, to see whether some remedy for the anticipated evil could not be discovered. He never rested, night or day, in his researches. It was night; the air was close, still, dusty, and oppressive. Now and then a

sudden gust of air caught up the dust in the street, and drove it along until it stood as a pillar; the gust ceased, the dust at once fell placid and calm to the ground. There were a few clouds; they chased each other over the bright surface of the moon. A solitary owl now and then uttered its mournful notes as it sat in some deserted tower.

The watchmen were alert, and the rebel sepoy paced to and fro, doubtful of the cause which he had espoused, and searching his heart in vain for an excuse for the abandoned path which he had followed. But hark! footsteps are heard along the Silver Street; people closely muffled have appeared—they have taken a turn to the right, and soon another to the left. A solitary lamp burns before a large house. Into it all hurry, as if ashamed to be seen, yet determined to learn their fate. The inside of the house was dark and gloomy. An attendant pointed to a carpet, without speaking. All sat down. The magician, accompanied by his daughter, soon appeared. He looked sharply at the guests, as they sat mute. No one spoke, or desired to do so.

The magician now called for a brazier. It was immediately brought, as if by an invisible hand; charcoal was already burning in it. The magician threw in rich perfumes, and some ingredients which produced the most vivid colours. The guests wrapped themselves closer and closer in their mantles. The light ceased; there was a moment of intense darkness, a crash, and then a vivid flame seemed to issue from the ground. All was changed: the guests sat in a lovely garden, breathing of spring; birds sang, and water rolled placidly from the fountain in the centre of the garden;

there were flowers in abundance of the rarest kinds, choicest colours, most intoxicating perfumes. All were amazed, and looked around in wonder.

The magician now called out in a deep, hollow voice—"Let those who peer into the future beware! To some it promises pleasant days of spring, to others a cold bleak winter!"

A tall stout man started up, and, at a sign, sat down by the fountain. He dipped his hand into its waters, and pressed it to his fevered brow.

"Now, Aziz," said the magician, "look into your hand, and tell us what you see."

The girl pronounced the mystic spell, was convulsed, and shrieked, saying—"Father! Father!—I see a tall man laid on a bed by the side of an open grave!"

"Oh!—look again!" said the tall man.

"Look!" said Fazala, passionately.

"Father! Father!—they are hanging the wrestler who is watching over the tall man's bed!"

"Begone! wretched man," said the magician; "those who are guarded in their last moments by murderers must indeed be desolate!"

The tall man staggered away. All knew the chief eunuch, Mahboob Ali, and felt sure that the wrestler was the accursed Mogul Beg.

Who approaches now?—a slim youth walking delicately.

"Father! Father!—the shadow of a crown, and a young man fanning an old man in a foreign land!"

"Enough—you are not destined to fill a throne!" The youth glided away; it was the only son of Zeenut Mahal, Jumma Bukht.

A fine stout man now approached.

Father! Father!—I see a string of pearls placed round a stout man's neck by a Feringhee, surrounded by hundreds of sahebs.

"A friend to the English," said Fazala—"happy is your lot!"

The Native Diplomatist at once placed a purse full of gold mohurs in the magician's hands, and threw a necklace over the head of the daughter, who seemed to be proud of the favour thus bestowed.

A tall handsome man now stepped up briskly.

"Father! Father!—a happy man: herds of deer, and a golden cup to drink out of!"

"Thank you—thank you!" exclaimed the hunter Kazim Ali, as he placed a musk bag in the young girl's hand.

The Newswriter now advanced timidly. The girl at once said—"Oh, Father!—I see half a gibbet in the Silver Street!"

"Take care," said Fazala, as the Newswriter sneaked off, "that you do not falsify your newsletters in these critical times!"

Three figures now stand before the magician—Diljan, Rosebud, and Nirgis.

"Father! Father!—I am fainting! Two young girls and an old woman, fresh from the palace——,"

There was now a fearful noise outside the house, and men were evidently breaking into it, calling out, "This Fazala has English concealed in his house!"

At a signal from the magician, there was a fearful explosion, groans and moans. But the daughter of the magician had led the three women to a very comfortable

side-room, which entered into the garden. She clapped her hands, and two negresses appeared, with trays and sweetmeats. The magician's daughter requested the three visitors to be seated, and taking Nirgis's hand, said—"Why do you seek to pry into the future, when the present has such charms for a court favourite?"

Nirgis would have replied, but Fazala entered in haste, saying—"The English have resolved to attack the black rebel army to-morrow."

It was now getting late, and several mutinous sepoys were wandering about the streets intent on plunder. Fazala therefore thought it desirable that his three female guests should remain with his daughter for the night; and upon Nirgis suggesting that their absence from the palace might give rise to anxiety, if not distrust, Fazala wrote a note to the chief eunuch, Mahboob Ali:—

"To the excess of respectability!—to MAHBOOB ALI, peace and safety!

"Three of your palace ladies have taken refuge with me; you need consequently have no anxiety on their account. You should get rid of that rogue Mogul Beg; he will bring you into trouble. Who do you think will win the day to-morrow?"

Mahboob Ali's carriage-and-four was at his door; it was 11 P.M.—the clock in the tower above his house struck the hour just as he read Fazala's letter. "Give my very best salaam to the messenger," said the chief eunuch, "and ask whether my escort has arrived."

"It has," said Afzul Khan, stepping into the room, and making his obeisance, "and I command it."

The eunuch was thoughtful as he entered his carriage, and gave the order, "Drive quickly to the camp at Badalee."

"We shall just be in time to see the English army routed," said Afzul Khan, curling his moustache.

It was still dark as Fazala, accompanied by Nirgis, ascended a minar of the Jumma Musjid, Diljan and Rosebud not feeling inclined to mount so high so early in the morning, for the air was somewhat sharp. As soon as the top of the minar was reached, Fazala pointed to the north, saying—"We shall hear the first signal of strife from that direction. You of course hope that the English may win?"

"How do you know I am a well-wisher of the English?" asked Nirgis.

"I know most of the news of the city," replied Fazala, smiling, "otherwise I should not perhaps be able to tell fortunes so well. But your secret is safe with me. The diplomatist told me you were one of his contributors."

There was a silence of a few moments, which was broken by Fazala, who said—"You should, in your reports to the Captain, endeavour to analyse the feelings of the city, and give a view of the state of parties in it: to state what the sympathies are which bind one party together; what those are which bind other parties together. For instance, the respectable Hindoos not in the army are mostly anxiously looking out for the restoration of the English rule, for they see no chance

of the King's party establishing a firm Government. The army may be classed as the second party in the state; it has no recognised head, has separate interests, is demoralised by plunder, infidelity, and brutal murders. The King's party has able men attached to it, but it is unaccustomed to govern, is contemptibly set up, and unable to bring the army into any degree of subservience, as you will have seen by the King's letter, of which you sent a copy to Captain L'Adone Saheb. When the fighting has once commenced, you must watch the state of the army closely; when you are at a loss, ask my daughter, Aziz; she will always have a memo. of news ready to give to you. But hark! there fires the first gun;—another—another! Now day is breaking rapidly." The sounds of distant guns, fired in rapid succession, were audible by the magician and Nirgis, in breathless anxiety.

Time flew on, and the guns ceased. What had taken place? Nirgis thought of Captain L'Adone, was sure that he would do something gallant, and felt convinced that there could be no defeat where he was.

The sun was getting hot; a few horsemen were seen dashing over the brow of the Paharee ridge—they rode at full speed—on, on at lightning pace. The Cashmere Gate has been opened to them. It was a time of deep anxiety to both, whilst three or four horsemen dashed into the palace. One man, well mounted, dashed up to the steps of the Jumma Musjid, and called aloud to one of the ministers of the mosque—"Take this note at once to Fazala." The horse streamed with sweat; his nostrils were crimson; his eye expanded and troubled;

his lungs hardly able to bear the load of respiration—still it was a gallant steed.

Fazala tore open the note; it was from the chief eunuch:—

“The English, as numerous as ants, as thickly crowded together as a flight of locusts, attacked the king’s army with fraud and stratagem at Allipoor. The English force took up the position which the king’s army quitted.”

“Thus the English are victors in the first move of the game of battle to-day.”

It was soon well known that the king’s army, broken and in disorder, were in full retreat towards the city, and that the British were in full pursuit. There was a brisk discharge of musketry, and suddenly the flag of England was raised upon the Flagstaff Tower on the crest of the Paharee ridge. Thousands saw it; and the diplomatist at once vowed an offering of ten cows to Brahmins. The gates of the city were deserted, the rebel force scattered like chaff. Now for one vigorous onset, and Delhi is won. But there was no spirit like that of Napier at the head of the British army; these costly gems are treasured up deep in the store-houses of a nation.

The sun was now burning hot, and Nirgis returned to the palace, whilst Fazala went to his house, musing on the power of a nation which even at the worst times can command faithful servants such as Nirgis.

The young dancer soon copied out the newswriter’s despatch for Captain L’Adone:—

“Ordered, on hearing the news from camp that this ill-disciplined army will not obey its orders, that Mirza Mogul and Khizir Sooltan should at once collect supplies. Various rumours now became current. It was known that the Lucknow horsemen had fought most valiantly, and that numbers have been killed. After that, Mirza Khizir Sooltan came and reported the state of the case. Mahboob Ali, the chief eunuch, although in bad health, had joined the army, and was constantly calling out—‘Oh, men! exert yourselves bravely, that you be not put into women’s clothes!’”

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHILST the Government of the North-West Provinces was entrusted to the Honorable John Colvin, that of the Punjab was administered by Sir John Lawrence as Chief Commissioner. The characteristics of these two Governments differed essentially: that of the North-West Provinces was Regulation, that of the Punjab was Non-Regulation—or, in other words, civilisation had done less for the Punjab than for the North-West Provinces. The temperament, feelings, and mental calibre of these two Governors evidenced a special mould: Mr. Colvin was, if we may use the term, of an inductive, Sir John of a deductive, cast of brain; Mr. Colvin possessed a refined, speculative, sanguine turn of mind, Sir John was of a rough, practical, vigorous character. Mr. Colvin was the fit head of a civilised Government; Sir John was aptly selected to rule a barbaric province,

which heeded a hard blow rather than submitted from the instinctive obedience which is the part of intellectual culture. Mr. Colvin had had a full view over a troubled horizon when entangled in the web of Affghan diplomacy; Sir John had received a practical lesson from the stern teachings of the first and second Sikh wars. Mr. Colvin was well qualified for the discussion of affairs of State in the cabinet which called for an intellect refined and improved by education; whilst Sir John, with ready apprehension, but a far less cultivated mind, was by nature fitted to act in a rough way, in accordance with the dictates of a willing judgment. Mr. Colvin was, when the rebellion broke out, powerless, from the almost total absence of European troops. The annexation of the Punjab had denuded our older provinces of European soldiers. Had Mr. Colvin possessed the means, aid for the siege of Delhi would have poured in from the south as well as from the north; but Allahabad, Cawnpore, and Kurnaul, had parted with their choice legions for fresh conquests, for Oude and the Punjab. When we look back to the past, and think of Mr. Colvin as we saw him at Agra before the mutiny, we feel a sincere regret that one so capable and ready to act with energy should have been cramped for want of troops, and should have closed his career during the dark days of the rebellion, instead of sharing with returning sunshine in that triumph to which his spirit and his abilities justly entitled him. Sir John's former knowledge of the city of Delhi and its environs gave him a decided advantage in dealing with that city during the mutiny, and he turned his knowledge to good account.

When our army conquered at Budlee and Serai, not

far from those battle-fields where the fate of Hindustan had been decided more than once, it was commanded by General Barnard. This officer had filled the responsible post of chief of the staff in the Crimea. He soon followed the Commander-in-Chief, George Anson, to the grave, struck by the same disease, cholera. George Anson was buried at Kurnaul; his remains have since been removed to the family vault in England, to rest among the ashes of the members of a family which have in their day served the State faithfully in all parts of the world.

When the siege commenced, there seemed to be a dearth of men of note, but there were many who only awaited the opportunity to spring forth and earn their laurel wreaths. Showers, the energetic destroyer of guerilla hordes; Hodson, the pride of chivalry; Tombs, the boast of the Bengal Artillery; Sir Hope Grant; Watson; Probyn, an approved leader of irregular cavalry; Chamberlain, who promises to fill a conspicuous place in Indian history from his past services and present high position; Colonel Baird Smith, who filled the responsible position of Chief Engineer, has already passed away from us, young in years: his accomplished intellect, his extensive reading, found full scope in alleviating the ravages of famine in 1861. During the siege, Colonel Baird Smith was most ably seconded by Taylor, who almost bore away the prize from his immediate chief.

But the graphic pen of General Norman, who shared fully in the dangers of the siege, and has since been nobly rewarded, has already engraved the names of these gallant men, who shared so honorably in the siege

of Delhi, on the pages of our history in imperishable letters: why then should our frail reed be bold to faintly trace over a record of the past? What have we to do with deeds of blood, as we hear the lowing of the herds as they return placidly to their resting-place under charge of their wild keepers? Now that the storm has passed, we should tune our harp to some tale of love, instead of looking back on the garments dyed in blood.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE British army was now encamped before Delhi. Nirgis could see some portion of it as she reached the top of one of the highest minars of the Juma Musjid. Whilst the city of Delhi was at all times exposed to a sudden, well-planned attack, the British camp was most sensitive to its communications with its rear being cut off or impeded by the rebels despatching a strong force round either of its flanks to act on them. But our right flank was more liable to be turned than our left. This was the strategic movement which all reasoning men in camp dreaded.

The Ridge which ran along our front, and approached nearer to the city on our left than on our right flank, concealed, as it were, the movements of our troops by a rocky impervious curtain. The ridge was on our right strengthened by the residence of Hindoo Rao, an old Mahratta chief who died before the rebellion. At this point, a heavy battery was erected, so as to counteract

the prestige of the Mohri Bastion, and harass an enemy attempting to force our front or right flank—for the rebels found the contiguous gardens of Subzee Munde a favourite point of attack; shelter was abundant, having been nurtured to a rank state of luxuriance by the waters of the Delhi canal. The extreme advanced post on our left was called the Metcalfe Picket, that on our right the Bird's Nest: it was occupied from the earliest days of the siege by Reid, and his stunted, small-eyed, broad-cheeked Goorkhas. On our right flank, in rear of Hindoo Rao's battery, we were forced to erect a battery, which gained the name of the Mound Battery, from the eminence on which it was placed.

Batteries were also subsequently erected to protect our rear. Our extreme right and left were also guarded, the former by the canal, the latter by the river Jumna. It was on our rear and right flank that most of the hard fighting took place during the siege.

We afforded an unusual military illustration of a force of unprecedented smallness being constantly subjected to attacks from the party besieged, but always repelling them with spirit: we were waiting, like the eagle, for the favourable moment to make the swoop which was again to establish us undisputed masters of Hindoostan.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was a fine morning in the month of June; rain had fallen abundantly during the night, and had washed the streets of the city of Delhi. A tall man walked down the Silver Street towards the Lahore Gate of the palace, not very fast but briskly, for he carried a fine large black buck on his back.

As soon as he reached the guard which was stationed at the Lahore Gate—he was challenged. Our friend Kazim Ali, for it was he, at once replied—“I am bound for the interior of the palace, to give a present to a royal beauty.”

“To whom?” said the Subedar on duty.

“To Nirgis, the singer, who is I hear, now high in court favour.”

“And where did you kill the deer?” asked the Subedar.

“Not in the English camp,” answered the hunter.

This reply gave great satisfaction: “No, no!” replied many voices at once; “it is our business to kill game in the English camp!”

“As bound by oath!” said the hunter.

This remark of Kazim Ali caused many a face to scowl, and had not the hunter been armed he would probably have fared ill. He however looked at his match and priming with a good deal of attention. Observing this, the Subedar said—“You may pass on; but in these days it is well not to be too free with a stock of jokes.”

“I am but a poor simple man,” humbly replied the

hunter, as he lifted up the deer; "if I were not loyal, I should not be looking for a court favourite so early in the morning."

As the hunter threw down the deer before Nirgis's door, Diljan peeped out of a side window. The hunter at once detected her with his keen eye, and said—"I have brought a nuzzur for Her Highness Nirgis Mahal."

Nirgis soon welcomed the hunter, and accepted the nuzzur, saying, "The air of the court of Delhi must be good when it attracts a hunter at so early an hour."

Kazim, when seated at Nirgis's request, replied—"The nuzzur is merely the envelope to a message from DeMonte."

"How is the disposition of the Collector Saheb?" anxiously demanded the singer.

"His Highness is like a wild buck driven from its accustomed grazing-grounds; always lifting up its tall head, and looking uneasily here and there. Our Collector wants news. But here is his letter."

Nirgis read it with attention, and arranging herself on the ground, with pen, ink, and paper before her, wrote as follows :—

"To His Highness DeMonte Saheb, Bahadoor.

"There is a vast plain before me; a large walled city has been built on a portion of it. It swarms with black mice, as numerous as a flight of locusts. On some small hills outside the city, a colony of white mice have taken up their abode. The black mice are striving night and day to expel the white mice, but without avail. The white mice are very valiant, and every day hundreds of black mice are brought back into the city dead and

dying. The white mice are very cunning, and one would fancy they are blessed with the *akul farang*.

“NIRGIS.”

Upon reading over the note to Kazim Ali, he smiled, saying—“Your Highness will soon be as clever as the hunted deer, which so often escapes the hunter’s toils.”

Nirgis laughed, and answered—“You will give this to the Collector Saheb, and you will tell him about all you see in the city. As to the palace people, there is no ruler amongst them; there is no *bundobust*—so the advantage which the black mice have in numbers is lost. Neither do the palace people make the use which they might of the magazine stores, although poor old Kulee Khan, the artilleryman, is, they say, doing his best to advance the royal cause.”

“Ah!” said the hunter, “the herd of deer from which I took the black buck which is at your door resembles the royal cause—without a leader.”

“Give my respects to the Collector Saheb, with this message.”

The hunter rose, salaamed, and departed.

“A pretty young fawn,” said the hunter, as he walked away. “A good lair this palace seems—if the royal cause prosper; if not, all will be cut down, like grass the growth of the rains, to meet the wants of the thatcher. It is indifferent to me which side wins; perhaps there will be more jungle land under a royal cause. The British Government, they say, destroys game; but if the Feringhee rule rise again, as one may say, from a death-bed, DeMonte Saheb will doubtless give me a reward; if the English lose the day, I intend to become

a forest ranger to this young beauty, Her Highness Nirgis Mahal, the daughter of that old vixen Diljan."

"Well, have you got rid of the black buck?" asked the Subedar on duty.

Kazim Ali smiled as he replied—"The young court beauty was as merry as a lark when she received what was, I fancy, almost her first nuzzur. What eyes she has!—what deer can equal them in size and brilliancy? Her teeth are as white as the foam on the sides of the conquering steed; her colour is equal in brilliancy to that of the lal; her voice as well tuned as the call of the partridge at early dawn; her hair as black as the dark plumage of the black partridge. But, my friends, farewell; you will soon prove how fortunate a royal cause is in having such obedient slaves—why should I talk of a foolish girl?"

Here Kazim Ali made the most profound obeisance to the Subedar, who, flattered by the compliment, exclaimed—"What a loyal man!"

The tall figure of the hunter disappeared; and thus Nirgis's letter passed the guard at the Lahore Gate.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DeMONTÉ was very glad to hear the Delhi news from the hunter, who had considerable difficulty in making his way back to the Collector's camp; but at the moment it was communicated to him, a fresh cause for anxiety had diverted the Collector's thoughts into another channel. A reliable report had reached DeMonte that a

party of English refugees had arrived at a village about forty miles off, and were endeavouring to reach the British camp before Delhi. The news was brought by one of Ram Sookh's spies, a clever, active fellow, a reformed highwayman, who had more than once escaped hanging under the rule of English law by a judicious expenditure of Company's rupees. DeMonte at once resolved to visit the party; to run all risks, and to put the wanderers on the right road. He therefore assembled his followers, and made a start as the sun went down. This move was agreeable to all, who had become wearied with an inactive life.

"We shall now sniff fresh air," said Kazim Ali, who rode by the side of Zalim.

The village watchman, who rode his small, compact, well-made ambling pony, assented, saying—"Change is agreeable to me; it often brings good fortune, which we most search for: it does not come to one's door like a thief in the night."

The hours of the night passed away quickly, for there was a good deal of animated conversation, all endeavouring to be cheerful.

The village at which the English refugees had taken up their abode was reached at about ten o'clock next day.

It was soon known that a party of friends was approaching, for the Russuldar, who had kindly placed his house and all that he had at the disposal of the Sahiban Ali Shan, immediately communicated the intelligence with a smiling face. Upon DeMonte's dismounting, his friend Salis shook him warmly by the hand. They had been fellow-collegians at Haileybury, and had often met when on furlough.

Mr. Salis was, in his way, a peculiar man. No one appeared to know much of him personally. Some of the wise men perhaps fancied that they had taken Salis's character in at a glance. The Collector had lived very much alone, even when at college; he there found but few congenial spirits. He, however, knew three or four friends intimately, and they had a fair idea of their friend's capacity. Salis had read a good deal, and had thought carefully on most public questions. In general conversation he never cared to shine, or express his views; perhaps he rather kept them in the back-ground. Indeed, whenever he allowed his fancy to play brilliantly on all around, he seemed annoyed at having broken through a well drilled habit of reserve. With ladies, Salis was an especial favourite; there was originality about him, which attracted without wishing to captivate. This made men very jealous. Still, those who knew Salis were well aware that he nurtured a lofty ambition; that he was capable of grasping most political questions with ready apprehension, and only waited for a favourable moment to assert his superiority over a servile crowd. The family of Salis was honourable, poor, and proud. With a Native, Salis could at once succeed; there was a fascination in his manner which at once attracted. "When I am with Salis Saheb, I seem to belong to the conquering side, and to see the vision of a comfortable jagheer, guaranteed by a deed signed by the Governor-General Saheb Bahadoor!" said all.

But we must now introduce a man of a very different stamp—a Sudder Judge—an old Bengal civilian—who had been specially deputed by his Honour the Lieu-

tenant-Governor of Agra to settle the country around Delhi.

Mr. Smyth set off from Agra in a suit of classical black clothes, full of official dignity, and loaded with forms, circulars, and proclamations, destined to work wonders. As he rolled along in his easy swinging carriage, made by Stewart & Co., of Calcutta, he remembered that he must wish an old friend good-bye—Jones, a brother Judge. He therefore called at Mr. Jones's door. Judge Jones, thinking something had gone wrong, jumped up, and ran to the carriage in a half dressed state. Smyth calmly remarked to him—"Mismanagement—sad mismanagement, my dear Jones! The people of India are only a little excited: there is really no mutiny, no rebellion—I shall soon calm the troubled masses. That foolish fellow Salis has regularly shown the white feather! Good-bye, dear Jones; when we next meet—a-ha! a-ha!—I shall be your humble servant with a K.C.Bship for services rendered to the State!"

"Pray take pistols," said Jones; "Here, Nubbee, bring the Sudder a revolver—quick—quick!"

Smyth now stood up in his carriage, knocked his head, sat down greatly excited, and said—"Mr. Jones, these are my pistols!" pointing to the circulars and proclamations, &c., &c. "You really must consider the dignity of the bench; it does not condescend to play the dragoon!"—"Go on!"

As Smyth moved off, Jones remarked to his orderly chuprassee, Nubbee—"The Sudder will, I fear, come to a bad end before long!"

Nubbee clasped his hands, and said—"Why grieve? An obstacle will then be removed to your honour's promotion!"

The carriage rolled on quietly for twenty or thirty miles. Mr. Smyth read, smiled, made imaginary speeches, and then slumbered. But—bang! bang!—and the coachman shouted out—"Oh! Saheb, Saheb! we are attacked by robbers!"

"Impossible!" replied the Sudder Judge—"there must be some mistake. Syce, open the door, and I will address the mob."

As the Sudder placed his auspicious feet on the ground, a spent ball struck him, and made him wince. He however spoke as follows:—"My very dear friends, a Judge of the Sudder addresses you: you must not forget the respect you owe to a tall pillar of the State!"

Mr. Smyth looked round with conscious pride as the mob rushed on, as he believed, to clasp the Huzoor's feet: he smiled and said—"My dear baba log——" Mr. Smyth now felt that he was being rapidly undressed. He was laid on the ground, still smiling, believing that his "dear baba log" were about to shampoo him. But he was most cruelly undeceived. A general plunder commenced: the Sudder was left minus clothes; the carriage was rifled; the horses were taken out, and, the harness having been thrown down on the ground, two stout fellows mounted them.

The Sudder knew not what to think; he forgot all fine speeches. A cloud of dust now appeared on the horizon, and the robbers making off, the Sudder got into his carriage, when, a party of horse riding up, the

leader, an Englishman, looking into the carriage, said—
“What have we here?”

“The Sudder, please your Highness,” answered the coachman—“Smyth Saheb, of lofty crest!”

Mr. Smyth now spoke with dignity—as far as a man minus clothes can be dignified—“Mr. Salis, your district must be shamefully managed: I have been treated with the greatest disrespect; look at my state!”

The horsemen who were with Salis enjoyed the joke amazingly. A rude suit of clothes was procured, and the Sudder was mounted on a pony, one of Salis’s horsemen saying quietly to him—“Great is your fortune at rescuing the Sudder!”

DeMonte found Mr. Smyth seated on a charpoy, dressed in Native clothes, his hair well brushed up, and as cool as a cucumber. He shook hands with the Sudder, saying—“I fear, Mr. Smyth, the rebellion has put you to a good deal of inconvenience.”

Mr. Smyth drew himself up, and replied—“Sir the Sudder allows nothing to ripple the stream of justice.”

“Along which we all float down so placidly!” replied DeMonte, sarcastically, turning on his heel.

There were other European gentlemen to be recognised and welcomed—military officers, customs officers, clerks, and amateurs. DeMonte found that he knew many of the party, as soon as he could penetrate their disguises. There was a good deal of laughing and talking over mutual dangers and escapes, and conversation was brisk enough until dinner was announced. It was laid out in the upper room of the Russuldar’s house. Curry and rice formed the staple. A white cloth had

been spread on the floor for the occasion, and the guests were seated on it in rows. A bheestie went up and down the centre, with a mug in his hand, which he filled from a goatskin; chupatees were flung to each guest by a man at the head of the table, with as much exactness as if a game of quoits was going on. The water-carrier and the dispenser of bread were old pensioners of the State. Going up to the Sudder, the bheestie said—"Will the essence of justice condescend to honour his slave by touching his offering with auspicious lips?"

Mr. Smyth replied with a bow—"I have never tasted better water, not even at Malvern, where I submitted to the water cure."

All were very merry excepting the Sudder, who tried to be grand, and failed; for no one with English blood in his veins can arrange his legs with dignity when sitting on the floor.

When dinner was over, charpoys were placed under the shade of a neem tree, for it was still hot. The ground was watered to lay the dust. Kazim Ali, Zalim, Ram Sookh, and others sat on the ground, whilst the Sudder, DeMonte, Salis, and the Russuldar sat cross-legged on charpoys.

It was soon arranged that the present state of the country required the presence of the Sudder at Agra, but that DeMonte and Salis should endeavour to reach the British camp before Delhi.

This important business having been settled, one of the bystanders ventured to ask "whether the Sahebs had caste?"

"Of course," said the Russuldar; "they are most particular on this score. Do not I know the Hill caste, the Lake caste, the Lushington caste, the Ramsay caste, the Currie caste, the Elliott caste? Indeed, a man may gain caste—which shows how superior the English system of caste is over the Indian. I once knew a Belaittee ayah, called Kitty; she was the wife of a European soldier: he was made an officer, gained caste, and his wife was in future called the Mem Sahibeh!" The Russuldar looked around, as if challenging contradiction.

"To what cause may we attribute the rebellion?" asked Ram Sookh, most mildly.

"To the antagonistic spirit of civilisation and barbarism," replied Salis, curtly.

"Yes," replied the Russuldar, "but I think you have forced our people up the tree too quick. English bridles, English boots, English coats, English words of command, English smartness;—you have overlooked many of the good qualities we possess, and supplied their place with unstable elements."

"All was now ready for departure; the horses neighing and kicking. Salis went up to Mr. Smyth, took his hand kindly, and said—"I had hoped to have profited by the presence of the Sudder, and by its advice to have restored order in my district."

Mr. Smyth, with great pomposity of manner and precision of speech, replied—"My dear Sir, I shall report specially on all I have seen and heard; truth shall be the guide of all I write."

The two cavalcades separated, one bound for Imperial Delhi, the other for Imperial Agra—at which place it

had the good fortune to arrive in due time. Mr. Smyth was a man again, in black, and always talks with fluent ease of how he checked the stream of rebellion, and mourns over not having been made a K.C.B.!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SUCCESSION of reports from the batteries of the Cashmeer and Mohri bastions was a clear sign that Kulee Khan, the royal artilleryman, was doing his best to aid the rising fortunes of the house of Timour the Lame. Some young British soldiers leant over the parapet of the Flagstaff Tower; they were good specimens of English pluck and limb. They belonged to the 1st Bengal Fusiliers, and were dressed in khakee uniforms; the colour on their cheeks reported that it was not long since they had quitted England.

"I hear," said one of those young soldiers to his chum, "that the enemy will come out strong to-day."

"Then let them come; the more that come out, the fewer will go home!"

"Aye!—talking of home: do you remember what the carman said to us when we cheered whilst going on board ship at Cork?—'Stop, my honies, and cheer when you come home!'"

"So, Bill, they did not take the enemy's guns yesterday?"

"They should have sent the 1st Fusiliers," replied Bill, promptly.

"Do you know, Bill, I am not happy?"

"Why not?"

"I have never yet had one of them black-fellows on my bayonet!"

There was the silence of a few moments, when Bill turned to his chum and said—"I saw a queer sight last night when on guard at the ruined house on our left. I don't mind having a smoke and telling all about it. We had best sit down in a snug place."

So the two chums sat down, and Bill, clearing his throat, thus commenced:—"It was about ten o'clock last night, as I was on guard in the verandah of the old ruined house on our left. Captain L'Adone, they say, manages the spy department in that house. Well, I heard a noise, and of course expected the enemy; so I called out, 'Who comes there?' Well, a small sweet voice says, 'Friend!' 'What have we here?' says I—'not, surely, one of them Blacks?' Well, the moon now shone bright, and the little bit of a thing on a pony says something in the country language; so I says to the Corporal, who was standing not far off (he knows what the Blacks say), 'Corporal, just see what this business is.' Corporal Jones called out, in the country language, 'What's the matter?' 'I want to speak to Captain L'Adone Sahab,' was the answer. Well, the pony was held by one of our men, whilst the prettiest, smartest young girl I ever saw got off the pony. She was dressed in man's clothes, and had a sword by her side. As soon as the Captain came into the verandah, the young girl was down at his feet in a moment. The Captain lifted up the girl like a sparrow, a candle was brought, and Corporal Jones says that some awfully

dreadful secrets were then talked of, which made his hair stand on end. As soon as all was settled, and a bundle of papers carefully secured by the Captain, the young girl mounted her pony and rode off, but not before she had said to the Corporal—"You must take great care of the Captain: he is a lord of great honour. I have much pleasure in giving you a small favour." The Corporal, who is pleasant of tongue, on feeling some gold mohurs in his hand, said—"Long life to your ladyship!" I have often heard of a gentleman paying to have a lady taken care of; but never heard of a black girl in our time paying a British soldier to look after an officer. But these blacks are strange creatures, and I feel queer, and dream like after the affair of last night. I should not, however, mind again seeing that young girl when the war is over!"

The alarm sounded; the sparkling line formed, gallant hearts beat fast, the shout ran high. Kulee Khan laid a gun with great care; it flashed, and the smoke cleared away. Two soldiers had fallen, struck by grape at the same moment: they lay close together.

"Good-bye, Bill! the carman was right. We both cheered as we were hit, and now we are going home!"

As Corporal Jones saw the pale faces of the two young men, he ordered them to be placed gently in a doolee and carried to camp, and said musingly—"The reapers are cutting down our lads pretty freely, but I trust in a few days to keep the harvest home inside the city of Delhi."

Thus it is with camp life: in the morning all is sparkling and dazzling; how sweet the flowers smell; how gay the scene; how high the heart beats. In the

evening, the damp dreary grave is filled in at the call, "Dust to dust!" How nauseous are the traces of frail mortality; how we shrink from them! But where is the soaring spirit which dared so much as the sun rose? We all feel that it has left corruption behind, tenacious of its nobility!

CHAPTER XXIX.

A ROYAL messenger, carrying a silver stick, stood at Nirgis's door. She was summoned to the presence of the Queen. The singer found Zeenut Mahal sharing in the general gloom which was stealing over the chief courtiers of the palace: for they were now aware that the rebel sepoj army fared but ill when it engaged the British troops encamped at Paharee. There had been much boasting, numbers of men slain, but no firm step made in advance. Still the chapter of accidents might bring something—the Punjab might rise. But those who were far seeing knew that troops were on their way from England, and that a respite was all that could be hoped for. The careless superficial soldier carried himself much as usual; but whilst chiefs are hanged, common soldiers manage to get out of the way.

Zeenut Mahal told Nirgis to be seated, and commenced by saying—"I know that you are loyal to the English; but still you have been well treated in the palace, and owe something to the Refuge of the World for his kind care of you. You are required to carry a royal letter to the English camp, and to bring back an answer. It is well to be prepared for all contingencies."

"What!" asked Nirgis, with no attempt at concealment—"do you think that the English will win the day?"

"I cannot say," replied the Queen; "but this is certain—our troops make no progress. You must now be our messenger; I believe you are in favour with a great Feringhee chief called L'Adone."

Nirgis blushed, and looked down on the ground; but soon raising her eyes again, said—"Your Highness is somewhat mistaken; I fear the Ameer L'Adone only thinks of me as a dancing-girl."

"Who will soon be the bearer of imperial despatches," quietly added the Queen. After a few moments' silence, the Queen said—"You can read the royal letter."

Nirgis, upon being presented with the document, read its contents at the request of the Queen:—

"To Sir JOHN LAWRENCE, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab—of stern will, of iron frame, of unrivalled power: Health and Prosperity!"

"Be it known to your Excellency, that a body of mutinous British sepoy, lost to all sense of shame, broke into the city of Shahjehanabad on the 11th May, 1857, and committed unheard of excesses. They forcibly seated the Huzoor on a tottering throne, and by threats and compulsion drove the Refuge of the World to do many things against his will. Weary of delay, the Huzoor would willingly reside, as of old, under the shade of the protection of the Company Bahadoor.

Therefore, on a guarantee being given, he would again return, like the dove of old, to the Ark.

“Transmitted by the hand of one of our slaves, who is secrecy itself.”

“You should leave this to-morrow morning,” said the Queen.

But how was Nirgis to reach the British camp? That was a serious difficulty. It was well known that for a Native to appear near a British sentry was to court death. Still there was a great charm in the idea of meeting Captain L’Adone, upon whom Nirgis bestowed many a silent thought. The singer resolved to consult Fazala the astrologer, and at once proceeded to his house. She found him apparently engaged in abstruse calculations, and lost in thought. At the sound of Nirgis’s voice he seemed to be recalled to earth. Upon explaining her wishes, the astrologer produced a plan of the British camp from a nook in the wall, and placing his finger on a spot to the left of the camp, said—“You will find Captain L’Adone at this spot ; he transacts all his political business at this ruined house.”

“But how do you know so much?” said Nirgis.

“I know most things,” replied Fazala—“even the contents of the letter of which you are the bearer.”

It was soon arranged that Nirgis should start at day-break in disguise, and Fazala promised a servant as a guide, also a quiet ambling pony. “Why,” said Fazala, “did you not go to the diplomatist for advice?”

“I hardly know why,” said Nirgis ; “but I feared to trust him.”

"You did right," said Fazala; "for the English somehow or other, are not fortunate in their Native confidants. I know not how it is, but as soon as our people come in contact with Englishmen, they are spoilt; they are neither the one thing nor the other. But I speak of things which probably have not struck a country singer."

Nirgis wished the astrologer good-bye, saying—"True! how can one fail to see the difference between white marble and common biana stone?"

"The girl speaks truth," said Fazala; "how can our people assimilate to their conquerors—so different in colour, feelings, religion? The sun, as it sets, gilds the picture for a moment or so, then all is dark and dreary!"

CHAPTER XXX.

UPON her return home after visiting Fazala, Nirgis set about arranging for a suit of man's clothes, much to the amusement of the slave-girls of the palace, who slipped in and out of the singer's room to gossip. All seemed to think that some fun was in store for them, and told the singer so. Nirgis tried to evade all questions for some time: at last she said—"I will tell you a secret in three days." This in a measure pacified all; and they gave their help very kindly in the way of sewing and chatting. It is very difficult to do anything secretly in India: shut your door at an unusual hour, and suspicion is at once aroused.

A sword was easily borrowed ; and as the morning gun fired, Nirgis mounted Fazala's pony, and, accompanied by his guide, left the palace by the Lahore Gate. A party of soldiers was going out to forage across the river in the direction of Shadera. Nirgis at once perceived them. As she passed through the Calcutta Gate, a water-carrier called out—"What bravery our young people display, when even our boys are ready to fight!"

A Mahomedan sepoy of the guard at the gate asked Nirgis her name: she replied—"Bukht Khan."

He then patted our heroine on the back, saying—"You will not be able to tackle a Feringhee soldier, but you will perhaps be equal to a drummer-boy!"

As the party passed on, a Hindoo soldier growled out—"Mahomedan boys do not generally have their ears bored!"

The Mahomedan soldier who had questioned Nirgis replied, with a good deal of sarcasm—"These are stirring days—we are now able to make converts!"

The Hindoo portion of the guard seemed much annoyed at this remark. The feelings of those who professed the Hindoo or Moslem faith were roused as soon as the British Government lost its power.

But we must run after our heroine: she has now passed over the bridge of boats, glad to escape any more questions. At the advice of her guide, she halted—"We must turn to the left," said he.

"By whose orders?" "By those of Fazala."

After travelling for about two hours almost parallel to the river, the guide remarked—"We must halt at the village on our right till evening."

"At whose house?" "At that of a friend, tied to the British Government by the strong cord of avarice."

The day was hot, but it passed pleasantly enough. As the shadows became longer and longer, a man who had shown a signal to some one on the opposite bank of the Jumna prostrated himself before Nirgis, saying all was right. "You will find the Captain there," pointing to a ruined house on a ridge of barren hills on the extreme left of the British position. Mr. Colin Lindsay, when Judge of Delhi, used to occupy this house years ago. The passage of the river was tedious and difficult: the ford was narrow—a few steps to the right or left endangered the life of a passenger; and quicksands had to be avoided as well as crocodiles. It was therefore late when the European guard, as mentioned in a former chapter, challenged the singer, who had ridden a little in advance of her guide, who cared not to be seen.

Nirgis's feelings were now wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement. The danger she had faced had been very great. She often found her thoughts fixed on the Captain. Why had she ever met this Feringhee Ameer—to what purpose? Would she not be entirely discarded when Delhi fell? Why then run any risks? Then, again, she felt that she had no claims on L'Adone. He had given her a gold chain in exchange for a cup of water. Still Nirgis felt that it was strange she should be selected from amongst the thousands of Delhi to serve the British Government. Nirgis once incautiously said to her mother—"Why have I been selected to aid in the capture of Delhi?" Diljan immediately replied—"Because, my dear, your poor mother's star is rising day by day: it seems to me doubtful whether you will become Empress of the East or the wife of a proud English Ameer, ruling millions of our people!" Nirgis

bit her lip with scorn at her mother's reply, but said nothing.

But we are wandering; for Nirgis has fallen and clasped L'Adonc's feet. An electric shock thrilled through and convulsed the fragile frame of Bukht Khan! How gently the breeze collects its force on a still Indian night; how quietly it makes its advances: it calls us into confidence, and all at once the storm bursts, the hurricane assails us—we wonder from whence. Thus it is with love!

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHEN DeMonte and Salis started, the sun was fierce and burning. What wonders we English might effect in India if the sun would veil its rays from us in the hot weather! But then, our Eastern subjects, touched like so many sensitive plants, would soon wither away in a climate which prevented their basking in perpetual sunshine. The horsemen of the party rode two and two, De Monte and Salis in advance, Kazim Ali immediately behind them, whilst Ram Sookh and Zalim were thrown forward as feelers. The country to the south of Delhi is flat, except in those places where the Mewat Hills crop out and rise to an extreme height of five hundred feet. Our two civilians were dressed in Native costume. Faces too fair for those of Natives, and horse trappings too good for irregular cavalry, however, told a tale, if too closely examined. The plan was to make twenty miles by sunset, and to put up in a royal caravanserai,

where DeMonte knew of a comfortable resting-place for a few hours, and could rely on the services of several of the chief men of the town who were known to be loyal to the British Government.

The cavalcade moved on pleasantly enough. The villages on the road evidenced how much the rebellion had affected them: they were full of armed men, who seemed to crowd together towards the centre, leaving the houses on the outskirts empty.

Many were fearful of a sudden attack, and did not care to be caught napping. Now and then the report from a musket, discharged by way of warning at random, caught the ear, as much as to say, "We are all awake here; come on who will!" Although abundant rain had fallen, there was no sign of the patient toiling yokes of oxen dotted over the plain and ploughing up the fertile soil. Many chief men of villages spoke to DeMonte, asking him how long the present state of disorder would last. "Probably two or three months," was the Collector's reply.

The serai for which our party was bound was now almost reached. It had two gateways; so DeMonte sent on two parties of ten men each, one under the charge of Kazim Ali, the other under the care of Zalim, to secure the two gates. As soon as these orders had been executed, our travellers had entered the serai. It was large and commodious.

Ram Sookh came to DeMonte after a few minutes, and informed him that a party of Gwalior rebels had put up in the same serai, at the opposite end, and were loading their muskets. "See," said DeMonte, "what

can be done: perhaps you can induce them to give up their arms!"

Ram Sookh soon returned with a smiling face, saying that the rebels had evacuated the serai, but were not willing to part with their arms. "A good arrangement," remarked Ram Sookh; "for we have a long march before us, and we do not require wounded men to take care of: the life of one of your highness's grass-cutters' ponies is more valuable at this moment than that of one of these rebels!"

There was reason in these remarks, and dinner was soon got ready with the customary aptitude of Native servants, who are always more cheerful in camp than in a house—theirs is a half tamed nature. Thus the two Collectors, considering the times, fared well enough.

The straight road to Delhi was about thirty miles. The guns of the besieging and nominally besieged force were clearly audible from the top of a tower in the serai, which the two Englishmen ascended. But a *détour* of about thirty miles was required, so as to give the city of Delhi a wide berth on the right. It was thus necessary to pass about six miles to the west of the road which Nirgis had taken when proceeding to the Kootub. A start was again made at 12 o'clock at night, man and horse having been refreshed by rest and food. The night was pitch dark. The villages far and near indicated their localities by constant discharges of muskets. Ram Sookh went on in advance, and proclaimed to the villagers near where the cavalcade passed, that friends were moving to Delhi.

When day broke, considerable progress had been

made. By 10 o'clock, a small fort had been occupied; it had served in times of peace for a police post. But the rear-guard did not escape molestation; it was attacked, but a brisk charge from a few active horsemen soon put the plundering Goojurs to flight. Delhi was now only about twenty miles off in a straight line, and a good many opinions were expressed as to "when Delhi would fall."

From the reports which reached DeMonte, it was clear that the country was full of plundering bands, making for Delhi; crusaders of strong feelings on the question of plunder. The day passed rather languidly, and all were glad when evening came on, and a guide was secured to point out the best route to the British camp. The cavalcade proceeded about five miles, and narrowly escaped an ambuscade which some plundering villagers had located in a garden, under the walls of which the high road passed. The ruins of the station from which DeMonte had had to flee were now seen on the plain, looking gloomy and sad. A dog barked here and there, to warn all that there was still some one stirring amidst this general desolation. DeMonte cantered up to the ruins of his own house; but a watcher was on the alert—it was the English bull-dog. He at once barked, and came well forward, as if to defend the ruins which remained; but oh! how changed from the well washed dog, who used to sit, white, fat, and sleek, by DeMonte's side as he administered justice, a picture of English vigour and robustness: he was now lean, mangy, and dirty. As soon as he heard DeMonte's voice, he gave a yelp of delight, jumped with frantic effort, fell back, and expired!

Ram Sookh now came forward, and suggested, that as the temper of the people about Delhi was not good, the Collector should not, when questioned, give any reply, but that a slave would answer. When challenged, Ram Sookh replied, "Crusaders bound for Delhi." The challenger would then say, "Go on, my friend, and may you prosper in a good cause!"

Great care was now required, and all felt a little nervous; for they were fearful, from their proximity to Delhi, of coming in contact with large bodies of the enemy. But all turned out favourably, and, skirting Delhi on the right, the right rear flank of the British camp was gained. Skeletons of men, carcasses of horses and bullocks, and tattered uniforms, which were scattered about, showed that war had commenced in earnest. A party of cavalry now challenged our cavalcade. Ram Sookh replied—"Two English Amceers, specially deputed from Agra to aid in the capture of Delhi."

In half an hour more the British camp was reached, and British soldiers were seen walking proudly to and fro. In ten minutes more L'Adone had welcomed DeMonte and Salis at his ruined house on the left flank of the British force.

"Now we must stalk for a black buck, to make merry with!" said Kazim Ali, as he looked carefully to the state of his matchlock.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NIRGIS's agitation prevented her speaking for a few moments after she had fallen at L'Adone's feet. By the time she had almost recovered herself, L'Adone raised the singer up, led her by the hand into an inner room above, and seated her on the ground, on a carpet. The Captain seated himself on a chair by her side.

Nirgis now gave the royal letter to the Captain, who was glad to avail himself of the singer's offer to read it to him. Upon having satisfied himself as to the purport of the letter, L'Adone wrote and sent a telegraphic message to the ruler of the Punjab; it was to this effect:—"The King wishes to surrender, conditionally." The reply is well known—"The old chap must come in without terms!"

L'Adone now commenced using the best Oordoo of which he was master, which, to say truly, was very bad, and endeavoured to find out the state of parties in the city. "Nirgis, who are the most able men?—who possess the most influence?—who enjoy the confidence of the people?"

The singer answered in a sweetly toned voice:—"The King is guided in his council chamber, and, indeed, in private, by the Hakeem; the city people talk a good deal about Bukht Khan, but many say that he is a coward."

The Captain, after a few moments' silence said, "Nirgis, could you measure the height of the city walls for me, and let me know how wide and deep the ditch is on the left of the Cashmeer Gate as you enter?"

"Your slave is present," replied the singer.

It was now Nirgis's opportunity for giving a turn to the conversation, so she asked—"Is your highness pleased with the news from and accounts of the city which I have sent from time to time? This slave has attempted to do her very best."

"Oh! what an opportunity for a gallant lover to make use of.

"So much so," said the Captain, "that the Governor-General, in a recent dispatch, has directed a handsome reward to be given to the writer of those valuable papers."

The singer was somewhat mortified, and replied—"This slave did not think of money!"

The Captain was puzzled on seeing the singer's countenance clouded, for he supposed that a Native would do anything for money. He took her hand gently, and looking into her face, said, "How can I serve you?"

Now this was exactly the kind of question the singer wished to hear; she wished the Captain to understand that she incurred dangers for his sake which she would not have done for anyone else. Hearing so plain a question, the girl thought of course that the Captain meant marriage—that was the way to serve her!—so she said, with a good deal of simplicity—"I fear there is no Kazeer here!"

The Captain, as he pressed the small hand of the singer, and saw the blood mantle in her cheek, and marked how her eyes sparkled, whilst she could not repress more than one sigh, knew that he was involved in a love-scene with one of his political emissaries. But what did "No Kazeer here!" mean? Hardly knowing

what to say, the Captain remarked—"Nirgis, how is it that so young a girl as you are run so many risks?"

The singer withdrew her hand, as her color faded away, and she replied, looking calmly at the Captain—"I thought that your own heart would have answered that question! Why ask a girl why she runs risks? Perhaps we Indian girls love a little danger; perhaps we like to show that we are not so poor-spirited as you suppose!"

The Captain saw that something hinged on the word *Kazee*. He repeated the word two or three times, and in a manner which clearly proved to the singer that he did not understand its purport. Her face then grew bright again. To show the Captain the meaning of the word, she took off a ring, put it into the Captain's hand, and holding out the mystic finger, said "*Padre!*" In a moment the gay Captain knew that he was on the very verge of an engagement—the man who had resisted the fascinations of the London ball-room! But what could he do?—the ring was in his hand, the finger of the girl was so conveniently situated as regards the ring, the girl's face was beaming bright and so angelic! There was the quivering lip, the languid melting eye, the heaving bosom, the convulsed frame, which was giving way with excitement. The Captain pressed the ring; the finger of the singer touched it;—Corporal Jones laughed! The girl started. "A message from the General, who expects your honour at once!" There was time for a kiss. The alarm sounded. Nirgis mounted her pony, pondering as she rode along of the future. Would that the Captain had placed the ring on her finger—that would have meant betrothal: what did

the kiss mean? The singer often repeated, as she rode along, "What do the English mean by a kiss?" A kiss from a soldier of a marching regiment means nothing. What cares he for hearts or hands? But L'Adone was a true lover in Nirgis's opinion, and she thought a good deal of his kiss.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WE must now take a brief review of the circumstances of the British army which was besieging the city of Delhi. It was numerically small, but held a good natural position. Supplies of all kinds were drawn liberally for the army from the rear. Communications towards the north were kept freely open by a fine wide metalled road, which gave the Punjab immense facilities for furnishing all the materials of war. The magazines of Phillour and Ferozepore supplied guns and ammunition.

The enemy had complete command of the fine magazine inside the city of Delhi. The Punjab was generally well disposed to the British cause. The place of our Poorbeea army had been taken by the rough fiery Pathans from the frontier, and Sikhs, who are, as Natives, unrivalled as infantry soldiers. The Native chiefs of the Punjab were staunch: Putteela, Jumoo, Jheend, Nubbee, and Kupoorthala could be counted on as with us. The herculean frame of the chief of Jheend will long be remembered by many of the soldiers who fought before Delhi. Attacks from the rebels were numerous.

As each rebel force marched to Delhi, loaded with plunder, stained with blood, covered with infamy, lost to honour, it had to test its fidelity to the royal cause by attacking the British army. Thus the Nusseerabad, Bareilly, Neemuch, and other troops again tried to redeem their tarnished reputation, but failed, for the traitor's mean spirit could not supply the bright halo which had once shone around many a brow. Still the Nusseerabad force attacked with spirit, and it required the tried skill of our far-famed artillery to silence its guns as the sun went down.

It had been the intention of the Commander of the British forces on two occasions to take the city of Delhi by a *coup de main*; but, owing to some misconception of orders, the attacks were never delivered. It would seem that the plans, although reasonable, were not sufficiently matured; the details by which they were to have been carried out were not well put together. At one time, there would seem to have been an idea of relinquishing the siege of Delhi, or at least of changing our base of operations. It was to a Council which had been summoned to discuss these questions that L'Adone was so abruptly called as to put an end for a time to his love-making.

When called on to express his opinion, L'Adone did so very readily: "We must not for a moment think of abandoning the siege: to do so would be to compromise our position, not only in the Punjab, but throughout India. We must strengthen our position by all the engineering skill at our disposal; and in having Colonel Smith with us, we have a host, as it were. As to our base of operations, we must stay where we are. We

cannot abandon friends, allies, stores, and magazines to our rear. No doubt a vigorous move of the enemy to our rear would inconvenience us, but we must trust to our military talent to extricate us from all difficulties. A base connected with Agra or Meerut means nothing. We must be resolute and daring, and make use of all the military skill at our disposal. If we then fail, we fall as good soldiers : we cannot retreat and live with honour."

General Wilson, Norman, and many others now spoke. At last Colonel Baird Smith remarked—" Captain L'Adone has said all that a good soldier and brave man need say."

The meeting then broke up, and L'Adone was aware that he had gained the good opinion of many amongst those present. There was no man whose approbation he valued so much as that of Colonel Baird Smith. When L'Adone returned home, he was cheered by the arrival of his civilian friends, DeMonte and Salis, who were general favourites in camp, and were often guests at the mess-table of the gallant 9th Lancers, which now proved how nobly a regiment can behave in time of danger. Those who remember the gallant hospitable officers of the 9th will often think of the loss of the many brave men with regret; they were ever ready at the call of duty.

As time wore on, General Nicolson arrived in camp with reinforcements. They were much needed : cholera had carried off many of our soldiers; fever had prostrated many; many were disabled by their wounds. All looked forward with anxiety to the assault.

But a very imminent danger threatened the force. A

strong party of the enemy, under the command of General Bukht Khan, the Bareilly leader, left the city, with the intention of making its way to the British rear. General Nicolson was at once despatched to attack this force. It had taken up a position near the Nuzzufghur Lake (Jheel). It was late, and the troops were tired ; but the General was urgent, and a brisk attack soon gave us a victory and thirteen captured guns. Many of the enemy were slain, many drowned in the Nuzzufghur Canal. DeMonte accompanied General Nicolson, and his local knowledge was of great use to the expedition.

When the news of the defeat of General Bukht Khan reached the palace, Prince Mirza Mogul would not credit it ; but the Hakeem told the Refuge of the World that the news was true. The King continued intent on his poetry. Zeenut Mahal could not help expressing her scorn of the royal troops—"But what could be expected from a General who trusted for victory to a charm muttered over two goat-legs by a fakeer?"

The King now recited a verse which he had composed, as follows :--

"May our enemy's army be destroyed ;
May Goorkhas, Europeans, Nazarenes perish !
I shall then call it the Eed Korban,
When, oh ! Zaffir, the Sword has
Vanquished your enemies !"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE battle of Nuzeefghur made the royal party very suspicious and captious. It was rumoured that a powerful party inside the city was in league with the English; every man suspected his neighbour. A fakeer excited suspicion—some said that he was John Lawrence in disguise: he was at once executed! The hakeem did not escape censure: he was searched for, and only escaped death by being hid for some time under the throne. He had offended the sepoy army, which declared that an army of reputed crusaders, supposed to be on its way to Delhi, was in reality in league with the British. It was consequently a very dangerous time for Nirgis to attempt to measure the city walls, and to report on the width and depth of their ditch. She resolved, however, to overcome all obstacles, and not to allow I'Adone to suppose for a moment that she was not worthy of the ring. Upon expressing a wish to one of the sepoys on duty at the Cashmere Gate to mount the wall on its right hand side, that towards the river, the sepoy replied—"You can do so, but you will probably be shot, for the English battery from the Custom House will, it is reported, open immediately."

"Oh!" said Nirgis, carelessly, "I do not mind a few English shots, provided I can gratify my curiosity."

"Well, mount the steps," said the sepoy: "but I am about to take my dinner, and do not care to accompany you."

Nirgis was soon peeping over the parapet of the wall upon the plain below, and having taken out a reel of

cotton from her waistband, fastened a stone to the end of the thread, and was soon in possession of the height of the wall. As she was pulling up the thread with a good deal of pride, a rough hand grasped hers, whilst a by no means melodious voice said—"So, little nightingale, I have caught you in the very act!"

Nirgis, turning her head, said—"Oh, Afzul Khan!—what a bold man you are to come up here."

"Bold or not, I have caught you, and will not let you go."

"Well," said Nirgis, "we shall see who will stay here longest."

"Come, come!" said the ruffian—"no trifling, or I will *carry* you off!"

"Don't be quite so sure!" said the singer. A tremendous explosion took place, and a well directed shot from the English battery knocked off the parapet close to where Nirgis and Afzul Khan were standing. Afzul Khan let go the singer's hand, and crouched with fear and terror.

"Well," said Nirgis, "you have soon parted from a friend. You are but a poor lover after all."

The battery now opened with furious energy. Nirgis wound up her thread, placed it in her waistband, and called out to Afzul Khan—"A pretty sight, is it not?"

Afzul Khan could only stare and tremble, as the singer said "Good-bye!" The coward could not move, but at last managed to gasp out—"Oh Nirgis, carry me off!"

The singer smiled, saying—"A pretty lover for a young girl it is!—the part of a singer is to warble, not to carry cowardly soldiers out of fire!"

When Afzul Khan's fear had subsided, he got up and ran to the palace, and gave General Bukht Khan information of what he had seen. Nirgis had not arrived at home more than a few minutes before her house was besieged by hundreds of sepoy, led on by Afzul Khan, calling loudly for the singer's blood. Nirgis, who never for a moment lost her presence of mind, said—"My friends, if I have done anything wrong, carry me before the King. Can you implicitly believe the word of a robber like Afzul Khan? Had he been a sirdar of the army, he might have been trusted."

All now called out, and asked Afzul Khan to what regiment he belonged. But he was so confounded he could not speak.

"See," said Nirgis, "the courage of a Delhi *Budmash*!—if you have any charge to make, take me before the King."

Afzul Khan now sneaked off, all calling out—"There goes a Delhi *Budmash*!"

The danger which Nirgis had escaped was considerable; for the Native army was becoming more sulky every day. Many of the worst disposed men, knowing that the struggle could not last much longer, found it a profitable occupation to accuse respectable men of the city of fidelity to the British Government, and to plunder them if hush-money were not at once given.

The English batteries had now opened in good earnest, and it was only a question of a few days as to the delivery of the assault. Afzul Khan, burning with rage against Nirgis, proceeded to the Begum Sumroo's garden, sat under a tree, smoked a hooka, and concocted a story against her.

He then walked along leisurely to the house occupied by Prince Mirza Mogul, and, sitting down by the doorway, thus addressed the porter:—"Sad times! sad times! when a royal prince cannot sleep soundly without rumours of plots. Oh! the wicked people of Delhi."

"What!" said the porter—"have you heard anything?"

"Yes," replied Afzul Khan; "something of importance, which I would communicate to the prince if at leisure."

The porter with a trembling voice at once directed a man with a silver stick to take him to the presence of the prince. As soon as Afzul Khan entered the room occupied by the prince, he prostrated himself with the most profound respect. Rising and advancing, he again dropped and clasped the royal foot, and thus spoke:—"May your life be preserved beyond the period which your enemies would for their evil purposes fix!"

"What!" said the prince, anxiously—"are those plotters within the city?"

"Most certainly," replied Afzul Khan.

"Who?" asked the prince, impatiently.

"Nirgis the singer."

"The court favourite!" replied the prince, musingly; "their treachery is near the throne."

No proof was demanded against the poor young singer; she was supposed to be guilty upon the *ipse dixit* of a profligate highwayman. This was the justice that had taken the place of that administered by Mr. Smyth in his suit of black within the walls of the Sudder. The prince ordered an injunction to be written for the close custody of Nirgis the singer, signed it, and sent off a

party of men to see it expeditiously executed. Afzul Khan stood in the most respectful attitude before the prince, who said—"Let this faithful servant of the state be rewarded with a khilut and a free gift of Rs. 1,000, and let him be appointed one of our Masahebs."

"For what?" said a voice, which made all tremble, and the astrologer stood before the prince.

"For loyalty," said the prince, with some warmth.

"To whom?" inquired the astrologer.

"To us," answered the prince, imperiously.

"Then search your well-wisher!" replied Fazala. Afzul Khan changed colour; his tongue would not perform its duty; his lips and his throat were dry.

The search commenced, and was concluded—the men of the silver stick declaring that they could not find anything; for Afzul Khan had, with a sign, given the searchers to understand that not finding would be more profitable to them than finding proof against him.

Afzul Khan gained courage. All walked towards the astrologer, who said—"Afzul Khan is a religious man; let the charm which he wears on his right arm be examined." It was at once snatched off. •

"Open it," said the astrologer. A slip of paper fell out.

"Read!" said the astrologer.

All held their breath as a moonshee read out—"For two thousand rupees, I, Afzul, agree to open the Cashmeer Gate to the English to-night at 12 o'clock. I am a devoted slave of the British Government!"

"Away with the fellow to jail!" said the prince. There was a good deal of kicking and biting, but the highwayman was overpowered.

All now shook and trembled like aspen leaves: in the general feeling of despondency the astrologer thus spoke:—"The stars portend ruin to this city. I see torrents of blood. I see princes of the royal race slaughtered like sheep. I see thousands of camels laden with plunder. I hear the wail of the widow; the shrieks of our fair maidens led from the city as captives!"

A shout resounded through the city—the assault had commenced! Men out of breath rushed wildly into the royal presence, crying out—"The English are advancing!" The Commander-in-Chief was as pale as death; he trembled; he could hardly mount his fiery steed, who snorted, pranced, and pricked his ears!—but he had been accustomed to a fair rider from the West, who was always one of the first to dart into the fray. The fair rider had been shot by a dastardly sepoy, and the horse had fallen into the hands of a Delhi prince.

"And these are the men who would govern Hindoostan!" exclaimed Fazala, as he returned to his house, and the abstruse calculations which would have killed Laing and Wood.

The messengers sent by the prince were not long in reaching the apartments of Nirgis, to whom they at once showed the royal order of arrest. Nirgis asked permission to read it, which was readily granted. Finding that there was no way of escape, she tied up a small bundle of clothes, pens, ink, and paper; she then explained all to her mother Diljan, and set off for jail with perfect composure.

The jail was inside the palace, and had a small window, which looked down into a court below. The window was carefully barred. The door of the room in which

the young singer was imprisoned was soon shut, and nothing could be heard but the tramp of the guard stationed outside.

This was an uncomfortable position for a young girl. Nirgis hardly knew what to make of the change; but in the East changes are sudden, and Natives succumb to them more easily than Europeans.

Diljan, as soon as she could realise that Nirgis had really been carried off, became frantic: she tore her hair, beat her head, and gave way to the most passionate exclamations. "This, then, is the reward of a poor mother, after years of toil—to see her daughter's beauty fade away in a nasty prison! Alas!—oh alas! alas!"

She then ran with screams to the door of Zeenut Mahal's apartment, breaking through the files of guards, and setting at defiance all court etiquette.

The words "My daughter! my daughter!" were clearly heard above every sound. A confused din was now arising from all parts of the palace. It flew from mouth to mouth that the English had assaulted the city. A panic seemed to have fallen on all; many were already leaving the palace: there was a bustle near the King's apartment, and he was hurried into a litter, to speak to the troops and give them confidence. As he was carried along, he repeated—

"How hard it is to govern men,
What thorns beset a throne!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

THERE is a great difference between a royal prisoner and a royal favourite." As soon as Nirgis began to reflect on her position, she felt that such was undoubtedly the case. The arrangement of her hastily packed property, even with the fastidious care which she bestowed upon it, occupied but a short time. The Natives of India are not fond of walking about ; Nirgis was accordingly soon seated, and the mind began to assert its empire.

"What does all this mean?" was the singer's question to herself.

The singer's thoughts then flew to L'Adone and the battle field. Would he ride into the city as a conqueror, having surpassed all other sahebs in bravery? Then where was her mother Diljan ; what was she about? The singer then tried a snatch of a song or two ; but her throat was dry, and there was no water in the room. At length Nirgis said—"The outer world seems gloomy enough to-day, I will try and sleep."

Nature was auspicious, and our heroine slept the sleep of youth. The shadows lengthened on the wall of the singer's room, the sun abated its fury, night crept over the city of Delhi. Nirgis slept on, regardless of the sharp roll of musketry which kept many a soldier in and out of Delhi awake.

Why does sleep so often beckon us back to the days of our youth? Why do we again run down some familiar English lane, knock at the peasant's door, and carry off some blushing girl to pick snow-drops with us;

to pass away the time in stringing a daisy chain? How sweet the violets and cowslips smell even in our sleep! We seem again to clasp the small hand of former days! Why? We have quitted home years ago. Our station in life, oh! how vastly changed. We have perhaps amassed riches, and been crowned with worldly honours. The bird-nesting companion of our youth now rules some honest English home, but is often pressed for food when the snow lies deep on the ground. When awake, the world obscures the past; but when sleep bids the scene, we seem to slip out of doors and to at once find the playmate of our youth, as fresh, as kind as ever. Our hearts seem unchanged; even our thoughts are those of childhood—pure, innocent, and artless. The diplomatist forgets his craft, the belle her pride in conquests; for we wander in a fairy land, where all is charity and love.

But too often the scene shifts, we know not why, and hideous thoughts drive away those of youth. Why? Wherefore? We seem to tread on a tempter's ground. The world, with all its corrupting influence, rushes on like some flood which has burst its bounds, and we feel that the airy castles of youth have been swept away. How long will the demon of darkness lead us captive? To awake were far better than to part with reason. Why should sleep toss us to and fro from good to bad?

Thus it was with Nirgis. The night wore away; the air became chill; there was a glimmer of light on the horizon. There was something more; there were coloured clouds, there was a concert of birds to welcome in the day. As the sun drove up his glittering chariot, the singer still slept on. As you gazed on her face you

could see that her thoughts were pleasant, for the undulations of her features and figure were those of rapture and repose. Was she wandering with L'Adone in some cool Indian garden, where water dropped like showers of pearls over some curiously cut network of stone?

Has she taken her lover's hand? If so, the dream is over; for the young singer's features are now convulsed with horror; the figure heaves as if the heart beats with unusual force; the hands are cast wildly to and fro. There is no rest in such slumber; better awake and see what the world has to offer with return of day. There seemed more than usual darkness, for the window was now shaded by a figure which seemed to be doing its best to ascertain the state of Nirgis's room. Our old friend Afzul Khan has seen the sleeping beauty, and exclaims, "Nirgis!"

The singer awoke, and was at once aware that a return to consciousness had brought her no relief. She sat up and gazed on Afzul Khan.

"Few sleep in the palace this morning," said Afzul Khan.

"And why not?" inquired Nirgis.

"The English are too close to us to render a residence in Delhi any longer agreeable. I am off for Lucknow. What do you say, Nirgis, to accompany me?"

"Never," said Nirgis.

"Well answered. I should have imagined that a girl in jail, separated from her mother, would have had some sympathy with the man who came to release her."

"Where is my mother?" called out Nirgis, passionately.

"She left the city this morning for Humayoon's

Tomb, whilst your slave, at the risk of his life, came to release you." And here Afzul Khan put on a hideously sweet smile.

"Oh; I am so thirsty," said Nirgis, her lips showing how much she suffered.

Afzul Khan disappeared, and in a few minutes came back, bearing in his hand a silver saucer brim-full of water.

"Come close to the bars, and then you can drink," said the horseman.

Nirgis' eyes sparkled at the sight of the water, which she was about to drink.

"If you drink, you come with me!" said the ruffian.

How pure the water looked, how clear; how it glittered as it gently undulated with the tremulous motion of Afzul Khan's hand.

"It is quite cold," said Afzul Khan.

"I drink not to be your slave," said the singer.

"Then may my curse fall on you!" said the horseman, as he dashed the water into the singer's face and disappeared.

"Strange that I should fancy this girl," said Afzul Khan, "when I might do so much better. What a spirit she has; what a tigress! After all, perhaps it would be as well to carry her off by force. Women never know their own interests.

The ruffian turned on his heel, intending to carry out his idea, but a shell fired by Corporal Jones passed close to him. It was a warning voice. A friend of Afzul Khan was standing close to him, whom he addressed: "There is a small girl whom I wish to put into a place of safety; come and help me."

"Very well," said the friend, and both moved on towards Nirgis's prison; but a shell swept off the friend, as if by magic—he became a mutilated mass of humanity. Afzul Khan was covered with blood, and turning pale, cried out, "What is a girl to me in such a storm of death?" Mounting his horse, he was soon beyond the walls of the city, out of the reach of English shots. As he pulled up, he musingly said, "Had I been an English officer, I should have gained the day; but somehow or other, we Hindoostances have a great regard for our own comfort and personal appearance. Wounds are nasty things."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AFTER Nirgis uncivil treatment by her lover, she hardly knew what to think of human nature. She had, however, not much time for indulging in her thoughts, for the guard who watched over it quietly unlocked the door of her apartment, and, advancing towards the singer, thus spoke—"Almost every one has left the palace: what are your highness's orders?"

"Bring me water," answered the singer. Upon having satisfied her thirst, she looked up into the guard's face, and asked—"What does it all mean?"

"It means," answered the guard, "that your highness has chosen the winning side. I am your slave. The English are now nearly masters of the city; they will blow in the palace gates to-morrow morning!"

"Very well," said the singer; "you are my servant from to-day, on six rupces per mensem."

The guard now suggested dinner and other comforts, to which Nirgis assented. He also went to a house not far off, and called for the slave-girls, who had hid themselves. "Come out, you sweet creatures, and wait on my mistress, Nirgis!"

Thus Nirgis found herself released from jail, with a man and two women servants.

Finding that Nirgis was now in a fit state to transact business, the guard suggested that it would be desirable to obtain a pass from the English: "Plunder and death reign supreme in Delhi at the present moment."

Nirgis, upon being presented with pen, ink, and paper, wrote as follows:—

"TO DEMONTE Saheb, Bahadoor, the very spirit of conquest: Health and prosperity!—The singer Nirgis solicits a pass for herself and her property, and also begs that the lives of her followers may be guaranteed."

The guard approved of the wording of the letter, and departed by the way along the banks of the Jumna, but returned in about four hours with the following reply:—

"TO NIRGIS the Singer, the Queen of Melody, the perfection of harmony: Health and prosperity!—How grateful the writing of a friend is; how consoling the reward of loyal services! The pass is herewith sent, as requested."

The guard now seemed to see his way to a certain future; so he sat down and indulged in an excellent dinner, which he felt assured would do him good, and restore him to his wonted spirits.

But we must now draw in our reins, back our steeds, and take our way to the English camp. The day had arrived for delivering the assault, the ever memorable 14th of September, 1857. Sir John Lawrence felt the ground slipping away from under him, and was fully aware that the capture of Delhi must be effected, or else—oh horror! Every available man was present in the camp before Delhi; there were wild Pathans from the Frontier, gazing earnestly on Delhi from the Flag-staff Tower; there were strong-framed, hardy Sikhs, who talked of avenging the death of a Gooroo; there were fair-haired warriors from the West, ready to mount the breach at the appointed signal. The evening of the 13th September found DeMonte, Salis, and L'Adone together. Of course the assault of the morrow was the chief theme of conversation. Kazim Ali, Zalim, and Ram Sookh were sharpening their swords.

The night passes heavily: what will the morrow bring on its silvered wings?—for many, a summons to the grave; for some, a bright wreath of victory! Still all will press on to the goal!

What a vast chasm there is between the hour before an assault and an hour after. Look into the chamber of the ruler of the Punjab, as he vainly urges on Time; look at the young wife in some flower-decked Simla cottage—she urges on Time!

Time passes on: a city is captured—a wife a widow! The attack on Talowrie, a suburb of Delhi, has commenced. The column rushes into the breach at the left of the Cashmeer Gate; the gate has been blown in—Salkeld has fallen. What a din of arms!—but all press on. A group stands in the ruined, shattered shell of

the Delhi Church : a goblet is raised to the lip, to drink to Victory !

Many years had rolled on since one of the group had in the spring time of manhood led to the altar of the church a young bride, attired in all the beauty of our western home. In those days, the path was strewn with roses : now how changed all is !—the ground is covered with trophies of war—corpses, corpses, corpses ! The college, the magazine, the chief eunuch's house, have fallen into our hands, and as the palace gate was blown in, L'Adone fell, pierced by a shot from some unseen hand. But the palace is ours ! and thus Delhi became an English prize.

It is a true saying that man is as grass : in the morning all was bright with the pomp and circumstance of war ; but in a brief space of time one of our leaders had received his death-wound, in the hour of victory. As he was borne to the rear, how many sad thoughts chased each other in rapid succession through the minds of the warriors of our North-West Frontier : they joined the standard of one who they felt was born to conquer ; a few more days passed, and the spirit of one of our boldest leaders had fled !

A settled gloom gathered round many a brow when the sad news spread through the British camp. But perhaps one of the most affecting incidents on record on the page of Indian history is that of the wild warriors from the north-west gathering round the coffin, as if by stealth lifting the lid, passing their hands through the beard of the dead, and then bursting forth into praises of his manly character, his commanding presence, his vigorous voice, his long marches, his sudden

attacks, his universal success as a leader. It was strange that the boy who gave up his sword so unwillingly at Ghuznee should have been wept over as the bravest leader before Delhi by Pathans. The traveller of future years will find no more instructive or melancholy spot around Delhi than that where rest the ashes of one of the bravest leaders during the mutiny of 1857.*

How still all is ! So thought Nirgis, as she sat close to a bed covered by a sheet. Nirgis knew not that L'Adone was dead ; she thought he but slumbered. The wind blew the sheet close to the face of the dead. Oh ! there lay her lover. "How quietly sleep these Feringhees !" thought Nirgis. "But where is the bridal ring ?—there, on his finger." The worn sheet could not conceal it. Oh ! what rapture the future will bring—what love and what joy ! But what ails the lover, to keep a bride waiting so long ?—A bride has been found—icy and cold ! Nirgis looked, but in vain, for a signal of life ; she listened in vain for a sigh. But friends are approaching ; a band draws near, of those who carry the bier. DeMonte lifted the sheet from the face of the dead. The singer sprang up, to pay her respects, and be claimed—but saw at a glance that the dream of her youth had ended ! DeMonte knew all. He took a ring from the hand of the dead, and placed it on that of the singer. Nirgis said not a word, she shed not a tear ; but the chill of autumn had withered her heart. What a deep mystery divides the living and the dead—the living from the dead form !

* General Nicolson, whose loss, as Lord Lawrence touchingly said, in a speech at Lahore, made him distrust the worth of the capture of Delhi.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE removal of the Court from the palace to Hamayoon's Tomb was a signal for the almost complete evacuation of the city. Many looked on the imperial city for the last time. Amongst them Diljan. She had hardly reached the fine gateway which leads into the desolate garden of Humayoon's Tomb, when she felt the warnings of that dire disease, cholera. As delirium came on, she raved about her riches, and the beauty of Nirgis ; but no one cared for her. Hundreds were in the same condition, and many welcomed death, having lost all that they possessed. The old King, Bahadoor Shah, was calm amidst the general ruin of his cause. Poetry was his consolation. Zeenut Mahal was full of anxiety ; her face showed how much she suffered : but a small slip of paper which the Fakcer put quietly into her hand reassured her, and her face brightened up. It was the guarantee given for sparing the King's life as well as Prince Jumma Bukht's. How the King was again brought back to Delhi ; how he was tried, how sentenced, how sent off to Rangoon, are now matters of history ; but we have no inclination to dwell on these events. Nirgis often met the Queen again before the day when she started for her place of exile. She bore her trials with spirit ; she had witnessed the wreck of a royal cause, the desolation of hopes built on a false foundation. Since the general ruin which had fallen on Delhi, Nirgis was strongly impressed with sympathy for its people ; of their sufferings she day by day saw and heard much. The last day on which Nirgis met Zeenut Mahal, the

Queen said—"Good-bye, Nirgis ; I must now say farewell ! These are the faded flowers of a gala-day, the withered offerings of age to youth. These are some of the fruits which ambition is doomed to gather. But still I feel as a Queen, and turn my back on Delhi without a sigh. The Empire of Hindoostan was worth contending for. I should have scorned to play a less noble part than those many aspiring women who have gone before me. Still, when will my eyes rest on such a noble city as that of Delhi?"

A few horsemen, a few Natives, a few European officers, welcomed Sir John Lawrence to Delhi, as he rode towards the plundered city early in the year 1858. This then was the prize of the conqueror. The ruler of the Punjab was aware, almost too late, that the tide of popular feeling was changing in England; that it was thought punishment was being dealt out too profusely ; that it was necessary to again knit the two races together. Layard's presence in Delhi was not to be overlooked. Sir John gave a few general instructions as to the punishment of offenders ; but truth requires it to be told, that punishments should have been restricted to a fixed rule, at least a month after the fall of Delhi. It is in days like these that the policy of a Canning brings relief, and stills the swelling, bursting passions of a nation. His memory will ever be associated with a pure feeling of mercy—a true son of our all-glorious nation ; a splendid beacon to guide the Indian statesman in the hour of trouble and of passion.

We sicken as we tread the streets of Delhi. So thought Nirgis. She had been amply rewarded. Ram

Sookh is now an Extra Assistant in the Punjab, and declares that had the Penal Code been in force in his younger days, he would probably have fared ill under some of its sections. Zalim has been made a Deputy Inspector of Police, but he complains that regulations do not suit him. Kazim Ali has obtained a rent-free tenure of 400 beegahs of grass and forest land in the Chuchak-wass jungle, near Jhujjur. He hunts all day, and says that he hopes before he dies to kill a stag on the Hindoo Khoosh. DeMonte was nearly being handsomely rewarded, at the intercession of the father of the young lady whose life he saved—Papa was an Agra swell of the Civil Service,—but Mr. Smythe, of the Sudder, called on his fellow Judge, and said—“ Mr. Pott !—my dear Mr. Pott !—my very dear Mr. Pott !—my able and respected colleague !—Mr. DeMonte did not during the days of the rebellion treat the Sudder with uniform respect : it would not do to revive old stories ; let well alone.” Mr. DeMonte did what any gentleman would have done under similar circumstances.

Mr. DeMonte, upon opening his English dāk, after a formal letter of thanks from old Pott, found that by the death of an uncle he was a Baronet with £20,000 per annum ; so he cut the service. Salis did not fare well for some time, for he was told by the Secretary to the Punjab Government that his services were not of that nature which fitted him for high civil employ ; but the Governor-General, when at Agra, requiring some state papers to be drawn up, the task was ably done by Salis that His Lordship at once made him Foreign Secretary.

We feel dull and wretched. Why, we can hardly

say. Perhaps it is that passion swelled up too high in the dark gloomy days of rebellion. Perhaps it is that we wandered too far from the path of impartial justice. Perhaps we were too backward in advocating the cause of the innocent. Is it that the spirits of the departed still have blood to be avenged? We resolved to quit Delhi. Still it is a city to be parted from with regret. Nirgis, since she had felt the desolation of Delhi, and of her own heart, resolved to set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Her preparations were soon completed. She left her house early one morning in a pilgrim's dress. The Lahore gate was shut. She commenced the pilgrim's song with her slave girls—

"Pilgrims bound for Mecca
Can't afford to tarry," &c. &c.

The gates were at once opened, and Nirgis with her friends passed into the country beyond. We wish her a pleasant trip to the Holy Land. Whether we shall again meet her in the plains of Imagination we cannot yet say; but we must shed a tear or so at parting with the kind public, who have allowed us to sport about like some spoilt child. Those of us who are destined to exile in the East would do well to try and find out whether there are not charms here which few of us have tasted, and of which we hardly suspect the existence.

But we are losing our own identity!—as we write, we feel that a spell has caught us up, like some Indian whirlwind. We therefore say hurriedly—Farewell! Farewell!

BISMILLAH;

OR

HAPPY DAYS IN CASHMERE.

CHAPTER I.

OF the many noble Mahomedan families which suffered in the imperial city of Delhi—or Shahjehanabad, as its citizens delight to call it—during the eventful year of 1857, there was not one which, lost more in dignity, position, and worldly advantages, than that of our heroine. To mention that she belonged to the royal family of Delhi—to state that she was one of the lineal descendants of Timour the Lame, of time-enduring renown—is at once to enlist the sympathy and interest of thousands in her fortunes.

It is not the burden of this story to again revive the never-fading horrors of the scenes which took place at

Delhi on the 11th of May, which were continued up to the 14th September, and then again burst upon this devoted city with all the fury of a devouring pestilence. We have to tread on classic ground at a much later date, commencing with the month of May, 1860. Delhi has again been re-peopled. Thousands of her citizens perished during the siege, many on the day of its capture by the British force, which was resolved to succeed or perish to a man; numbers, worn out by disease and poverty, expired amongst the various shrines which surround the city, to which in her palmy days thousands of pilgrims used to flock, dressed in their gay holiday attire—the élite of Meerut, Kurnaul, Paneeput, Saharunpoor, Bareilly, and Lucknow. The mention of Shah Murdan, the Kadam Shareef, Nizamooddeen, Khoja Sahib or the Kootub, far-famed for its magnificent pillar, recall at the same time the parties of pleasure, now past, in bright contrast with the bright and gloomy days of 1857 and 1858, so replete with suffering to the Mahomedans of Delhi. Great indeed is the responsibility of that man who fans the slumbering embers of revolt, aims at a crown, and fails: he drags thousands down with him to the tomb;—the pauperised mother, the young and desolate widow, lament their loss in vain.

The city of Delhi was bright and cheerful on the morning of the 1st of May, 1860. The weather was warm, it is true, in the middle of the day: the sensitive European had already resorted to his thermantidote, *tattees* and *punkas*; but the dawn of day, and the hours of the morning up to 9 or 10 o'clock, were perfection in the eyes of a citizen of Delhi. “Where shall we

travel, or wander, and find such a glorious city!—where such wealth, where such a climate, where such cleanness and propriety of manners, language, and carriage, where such a palace, where such a Jumma Musjid—the ornament of the world?” The rebellion has changed Delhi: we miss the bustle of the palace; its rows of fine large carriages drawn up on the glacis close to it, decked out with their crimson curtains, green checks, or blinds, to keep out the flies,—for which Delhi is famous,—drawn by fine large Nagore bullocks, ready at a moment’s notice for a pleasure trip. The clothing of the dandies of the Silver Street has sadly fallen off: we no longer see the crowds of golden caps, the jaunty air, the fine muslin dress; for in the olden day a man, however poor, loved to keep an embroidered cap and a nice white muslin dress in store, so that he might, after the labours of the day were ended, take a stroll as a gentleman through the fashionable quarters of the city. A lounge through the palace for court news, a chat with a friend in the Silver Street, a sniff or two at the fine perfumes of the far-famed shops of the Dariba, a prayer or so on the fine elevated platform of the Jumma Musjid, a look or two at the crowd of ponies always ready for sale, to suit the convenience of travellers to all and from all parts of the world, at the steps of the Jumma Musjid, a walk into the Chitli Tomb, and then home through the Red Well Street—were the evening recreations of a Delhi man.

Mirza Mogul and the princes might be seen at the large house, on the right hand side of the road, when passing up the Silver Street from the palace, with their retinue of elephants and gaily-dressed horsemen and

footmen. If Zeenut Begum was tired of the society of the old King, she might be found with her son, Jumna Bukht, at the large house in the Red Well Street, occupied after the rebellion by Sir Theophilus Metcalfe. The Bolaki Begum Street was then crowded by many Delhi notables, most of whom are now dead ; and the street will soon disappear, as well as that of the Dariba, to increase the open space round the palace. We miss the élite of Delhi—their place knows them no more : in their room, we mark the European soldier, active, bold, modest, with a lion heart ; officers passing up and down the Silver Street on their fiery Arabs, hardly able to avoid knocking over the footmen, composed of a mingled mass of Hindoos and Mahomedans from all parts of Hindoostan. The Sikh soldier looks higher than he did ten years ago : he hardly then hoped that he would succeed in revenging the murder of his Gooroo at Delhi, and that the Grunth would be read at the small temple close to the chief police office in the centre of the city, in the midst of the Silver Street. It was opposite the police office that the gallows did their duty after the fall of Delhi.

Bismillah opened her eyes at the second summons of her nurse Kareeman, one of those faithful attendants of a Mahomedan family who live and die in it. After the fall of Delhi, many women might be seen toiling through the sun, with blistered feet, almost dropping with exhaustion from carying their foster-children, whose appearance told that they belonged to some of the first families of Delhi. When Moolraj surrendered at Mooltan, a faithful Brahmin woman took charge of his son, born during the siege, and carried him in safety to

Akalghur, near Lahore;—a striking instance of Native fidelity.

“You have slept long and soundly,” said Kareeman.

“Nurse, I have wandered in my dreams amongst pleasant fields, and sat beside cool fountains.”

“Your dreams will soon be truly realised!” said the nurse: “we leave in a few days for Paradise—for Cashmere!”

“What do I hear?” cried Bismillah, jumping up with a bound, and catching hold of her nurse’s hand—“Are we to visit the land of my ancestors,—of Akbar, Shah Jehan, and Jehangeer, of blessed memory?”

The nurse looked grave, and said, “My child, the sceptre has passed away from your house!”

“Yes,” replied the child; “but I still feel the blood in my veins to be that of a princess!” Whilst she spoke, she drew herself up to her full height,—a mere girl of fourteen, not above four feet high, with a perfection of form and grace which at once proclaimed her one of a royal line. The nurse was so surprised, that she at once fell at her feet, clasped them, and exclaimed with great fervour, “May God protect us!”

“Protect whom?” asked a female, gliding into the room from the other side of a purdah, which was so hung as to give privacy to Bismillah’s room. Zeenut Mahal, whom we now introduce, was Bismillah’s sister. She was a widow of not more than twenty, somewhat taller than her younger sister,—perhaps two inches,—but stouter. Her husband, a first cousin of the King of Delhi, had been shot as a rebel after the fall of Delhi. He had taken refuge in a small house in the bazar of Balubghur, whose chief was captured by a force under

Brigadier Showers, C.B. ; but a member of the Timour family can easily be detected : hence his capture and execution.

“ May God protect us all ! ” said the nurse, who, rising from the ground, saluted Zeenut Mahal with the benediction—“ May the peace of God be on you ! ”

Bismillah was enchanted with the prospect of a trip to Cashmere. Zeenut Mahal had resolved upon the step in consequence of the many sad recollections which Delhi was constantly presenting before her. It was a great question who was to accompany the party. At last the lot fell on Zynooddeen and Indad Ali, a nurse, and three or four other inferior domestics. Zynooddeen was a bigot, well read in Arabic and Persian, an accomplished scholar, and a devoted adherent of the house of Delhi. Indad Ali was a palace man, had served in the English army, and had seen a good deal of life in India. He was a jovial, bold, and a fair Mahomedan, but not too strict.

“ We shall probably find Narcissus and the Pearl on our journey,” said Bismillah : “ how they would enjoy the trip to Cashmere ! ” This related to two slave-girls of the family, who were missing since the fall of Delhi. One had been seen mounted on a pony, and traced as far as Lahore, in charge of a rough Pathan of the frontier. Of the other, nothing could be ascertained, although very strict inquiries had been made for her in many of the English cantonments.

There were of course a good many difficulties to be overcome as to leaving Delhi without the knowledge of the civil authorities, and there was a good deal of discussion as to whether a *bylie* (or carriage drawn by

bullocks) should be used, or the English mode of travelling—the dāk carriage—adopted. Indad Ali undertook to arrange the political part of the business. He went to the kotwal, or chief officer of the city, sat down with him alone for a few minutes, and made matters so smooth with this official that, for the future, he only regarded Zeenut Mahal and Bismillah as the wife and daughter of Indad Ali. Embracing Indad Ali, the kotwal said—"How pleasant it is to have a friend whose society is so agreeable. May God always protect and preserve my friends!"

CHAPTER II.

ZEENUT BEGUM (for in future we drop the more stiff title of Mahal) was particularly pleased with the adroit, quiet, business-like manner in which Indad Ali had managed the preliminaries for an immediate departure of her party from Delhi. She smiled kindly on her old servant, and said, looking at him somewhat inquiringly—

"You have done famously; but the treachery of Native police officials in Hindoostan is a proverb. How do you know that the kotwal of Delhi is to be trusted?"

Indad Ali quietly unwound his waistband, and produced a small packet of papers. He carefully arranged them on the carpet, having first solicited permission to seat himself, and, after a good deal of deliberate inspection,—for he was not much of a scholar,—selected one,

and, with a pleasant intonation of voice, and a bright smile playing on his countenance, replied—

“So many respectable men were blown about in Hindoostan during the late rebellion, by adverse winds, that your highness must not be surprised at the kotwal of Delhi having ridden on more than one horse to escape them. The treachery and perfidy of Indian officials needs no defence from me: the paper I hold in my hand is a most earnest and pathetic appeal from the kotwal of Delhi to Mirza Mogul, begging for service, and stating that he had with difficulty and conscientious doubts served a foreign race for thirty years. It is a bond of union between me and the kotwal. Whenever I gently hint at its possession, he sees with my eyes, hears with my ears, and is as a father to me !”

Indad Ali again secured the precious document, and was about to retire from the presence of his mistress, when she said—

“Since you have managed so well about the characters we are to assume when we leave Delhi, also arrange for the mode of our departure.”

Indad Ali at once answered: “Your commands have been already anticipated. I have settled with the Inland Transit Company for two nice, new travelling carriages as far as Lahore, to start at 4 P.M. on the 15th May; they have already been paid for, and the services of a respectable Mahomedan driver secured—an old servant, I may say, of your royal house. We all travel as the establishment of Captain Brown,—a well-known and esteemed English name,—in command of recruits coming up from Kurrachce. It is always conclusive mentioning the name of a regiment; so I have, as yet, left it behind the purdah of concealment.”

The police in India always molest Native vehicles ; but who can for an instant question the loyalty of a palkee gharee painted red, with its venetian blinds, its English baggage inside and out, with a vigorous blow of the horn to warn all to get out of the way, aided by a good cut of the whip for the lingerer ? Indad Ali was a man of acute and matured observation ; he had served both with English and Native masters, and knew the weak points of the character of each,—when they would bustle up, and when they might be led quietly like a horse to water. The 15th of May, as has already been stated, was the day settled for the departure of the party ; but there were many preparations to be made, private leave-takings to be gone through, goods to be purchased for the trip, and an English air to be given to the dress and belongings of the party.

All was arranged by the sagacity, forethought, and prudence of Indad Ali. He purchased two or three English boxes for clothes, and an overland trunk, from Hubble-bubble—a Moslem trader carrying on his business close to the kotwalee. [This nickname is a legacy of some royal officers, to whose unpliant tongues the name of Hubeebullah was a poser.] On the boxes the name of “*Captain Brown, Her Majesty’s Army, in Command of Recruits from England,*” was carefully painted. Hubble-bubble wished to add an *e* to the name of Brown, saying, “All Queen Victoria’s officers are very big men—plenty money—big house in England—only come to India for pleasure. Brown common name—Browne proper—Smith very vulgar—write Smythe. Old Company’s officers too fond of pice and Indian air—stay too long time—get yellow face and bad

liver—all go home now. Queen Victoria's officers push very hard for the pleasure of living in their bungalows, and drawing their little pay—Queen Victoria's officers pad all over, and very great swell!”

Indad Ali objected to the *e*, fancying it might create a pang in the heart of the civil officers of the Government; it might be considered as an innovation, and also rouse the ire of the officers of the late Company's army, should they chance to cast an eye on the name of—Brown. On one small box, “*Glass, with great care,*” was painted. A regulation infantry sword was procured from an officer's bearer, who parted with it for five rupees, and used for years after to mourn with his master about the sudden disappearance of his “kirick,” consoling him at the same time with the balm of “Queen Victoria's officer rich man—not care for dirty pice!” Two or three bottles of tart-fruits, a carpet-bag, and a hat-box, containing—if the truth must be told—paw, henna, and a few odds and ends, completed the outfit.

Indad Ali and Zynoondeen were provided with two large white turbans, as worn by English table attendants in Hindoostan, in exchange for their every-day smart embroidered caps; and a dress was procured for Bismillah and Zeenut Begum—a cheap purchase from the wife of a European non-commissioned officer, who had a way of parting with her clothes for a “dhrop of the cratur comfort.” With a pocket-handkerchief over their heads, our heroines might have passed muster for two respectable half-caste women—“drab-coloured,” as Sir Charles Napier termed them. But the hearts which beat with such quick pulsation, when trying on their

disguises, together with the angry glances of the dark-flashing eyes, at once proclaimed that no base blood flowed in the veins of Bismillah and Zeenut Begum.

The anticipated departure from any place where we have passed our childhood, although regarded with pleasure as long as the event is still distant, yet, as day after day passes by, causes pain as we become more and more attached to by-gone scenes and recollections. "We shall leave home, and, perhaps, not see it again!" is felt by most of us when setting out on a long journey. We English in India are well acquainted with these workings of the feelings. How many of us leave a happy English home, and wander about the world without one for the rest of our lives—and yet we are envied by Natives as the happy and fortunate race! With all our blessings we are——exiles! Amalgamation will, however, soon scatter the chaff which Hubble-bubble says "has accumulated on the green fields of Hindoostan." Our feet linger still on the dark mountains, uncertain which way to tread.* When will brave men again place the laurel wreath on the brow of the Indian army, which envy now strips off leaf by leaf? Nobly they sustained the diadem of Britain during the year 1857: must its weight now crush them? Hubble-bubble says the Company's officers "were too fond of pice"—the royals never want their pay;—lucky dogs!

* Justice was fully dealt out by the Marquis of Salisbury, as Secretary of State for India. His career, when in office, was most brilliant.

CHAPTER III.

It was a sense of these feelings which made both Bismillah and Zeenut Begum anxious to take a last farewell of the familiar spots in and about Delhi, prior to their departure for Cashmere. Perhaps they might never live to return—the future was a sealed book. It was consequently fixed, that one day should be devoted to an inspection of the city of Delhi—another to that of its environs: for the view of the former the 12th of May was settled; for that of the latter the 14th of May—a day's rest being considered essential for wearing off the fatigue of the sight-seeing of the 12th.

When the news of the completion of all the arrangements for the trip round the city was communicated to Bismillah by her nurse, she was sitting in an upper room of the house occupied by the family in the Red Well Street. It presented a fine frontage to the street, and was highly ornamented with fresco paintings outside. A battle was represented on one of the compartments, in which an English officer in a red coat bore a conspicuous part, with a sword in one hand, and a bottle of wine in the other. When the archway was passed, the visitor found himself in a fine open court-yard, in which a fountain was playing, the basin into which the water fell being of pure white marble—a family heirloom, the gift of the Emperor Shah Jehan. There were three inner court-yards for the use of the women of the family, each with its appropriate suite of apartments. There were also two warm baths attached to the palace, one for the male, the other for the female members of the

family, at which the bathmen attended when required. In fact, nothing could be more complete and comfortable than the arrangements of this family. Round the fountain, the gardener had planted rose-trees; and flowers in full bloom, of varied colours, added much to the beauty of the scene. The basin which received the waters of the fountain was stocked with golden fish, the original gift of a Calcutta merchant, who brought them as a small nuzzur. Amongst plants of aquatic growth, the lotus shone forth conspicuous, rearing its lovely pink flower from amongst its leaves, which, broad, soft, and slightly tinted with copper-colour, retained on their even surface countless drops of water, which appeared like so many pearls, as the bright rays of the sun passed over them. It was a subject of general remark when Delhi was captured in 1857—"How comfortable and commodious the houses of the Delhi people are!" The style in which the Natives lived struck every one with surprise, profoundly ignorant as most English are of the turn of thought, habits, and customs of the Natives of India. The room in which Bismillah usually passed her time had a window looking out into the street, and also one which gave her the exclusive command of a quiet retired court-yard. She sadly missed her slave-girls Narcissus and the Pearl, and, disliking fresh and untried women-servants, was principally attended by her nurse. The room was covered with a fine white cloth, on which not a speck of dust could be traced, and furnished with a divan, which ran round it, the pillows being stuffed with cotton, and covered with white cloth. There were a few good pictures on the walls, the works of the famous painter Azim, when in his palmy days of fame:

one was of Bahadoor Shah, the ex-King of Delhi; another of the far-famed beauty Taj Mahal; a third, of the Emperor Shah Jehan. Wall-shades of varied colours, blue, green, pink, pale-yellow—were fixed to the walls. On Bismillah's right hand might be seen her Koran, carefully folded up in its red cover, bound round with an edging of yellow; there was also a low wooden stand, on which it could be placed in a convenient position before the reader. The doors and the windows of the room were protected by purdahs and chicks made up of neatly cut pieces of bamboo, coloured red, green, and yellow, to keep out the glare and the swarms of flies which afflict Delhi. A pawn-box of silver, of the most approved palace fashion, completed the furniture of the room.

Bismillah sat on the ground. She was dressed entirely in white—in a jacket, an under-jacket, and a scarf over her head and shoulders; her trousers were loose and wide, after the custom of Delhi ladies, as seen amongst the upper classes; her hair was drawn well back, and showed a fine forehead, and highly arched eyebrows, well marked; her nose was, perhaps, a little too high for English taste—but theirs is not the only style of beauty in the world, and Bismillah's nose was a marked feature of the Timour family. Teeth as bright as pearls, a delicately formed mouth,—a little wanting, perhaps, in pliancy,—a slender figure, of perfect symmetry, placed our heroine high up in the list of beauty. Her complexion was nut-brown, and the blood of a Timour, which mantled in her cheeks, giving additional lustre to a bright and glittering eye, told the tale of a strong will and a haughty temperament. Bismillah was a mere girl, and yet there was but little of the soft-

ness or hilarity of youth about her. Although Zeenut Begum was the older of the two, she was much more soft and kind in her disposition, and had far less pride in her composition; she also was a beauty, formed in a milder mould.

The turbulent character of the tribes in the vicinity of Delhi, whose depredations and predatory habits were considerably facilitated by the ravines which, surrounding the city, acted as channels to carry off the torrents of rain which rush down from the low ranges of hills in the vicinity of Shahjehanabad, led the emperor who gave his name to the modern Delhi—Shahjehanabad, to form the comprehensive plan of founding a new city. The palace—by some designated a fort,—which stands out boldly, one of the most prominent and attractive sights of Delhi, is called, by the somewhat boastful and exaggerating Mahomedan, the private residence of the king. It contained, prior to the rebellion of 1857, a population of 20,000, of mixed religion, caste, and descent. The fair sons of Persia, Cabool, and Cashmere met in familiar intercourse with all the shades of caste and colour producible in Hindoostan. The king was supreme within the palace, where the forms of the old Mogul Court, together with its etiquette, were still kept up with a strict adherence to the shadow of royalty which lingered on the threshold of Hindoostan. Another flicker, and it had passed away.

CHAPTER IV.

THE gateway which leads into the palace opposite to the Silver Street, and called that of Lahore, was, prior to the rebellion, occupied by a killadar or governor, an English officer in the service of the East India Company. He acted as Assistant to the Agent to the Lieutenant-Governor, in addition to his strictly military duties. Modern Delhi was at first the encamping ground of the army of the Emperor Shah Jehan ; the principal bazar attached to it ran at right angles to the Lahore Gate. It has now grown into a street of well merited renown, known throughout the world as the Silver Street.

The space selected for this standing camp was protected by walls, towers, and a deep ditch. After Lord Lake's capture of Delhi, the fortifications were improved and strengthened, as deemed necessary, by the appliance of British skill and science. As time wore on, the marked characteristics of a standing camp disappeared, street after street, mosque after mosque, supplanted more humble dwellings. These were soon thrown into shade by imperial parks and palaces. A canal, constructed with great skill and care, threw a plentiful supply of water into the city :—it was at the point where the canal passes under the city walls, as it enters Delhi, that it was proposed to attack it during the siege. The plundering propensities of the turbulent tribes in the vicinity of Delhi were thus checked as far as the city was concerned, but beyond the walls they were but indifferent subjects, and even in Sir John Lawrence's time (he was Magistrate of Delhi), the Goojurs played him a

few tricks. When the rebellion broke out, the turbulent tribes about Delhi soon proved themselves worthy sons of races long since celebrated as freebooters.

The Jumma Musjid, the ornament and pride of the city, was constructed on colossal proportions, well raised on a platform, which is ascended by flights of steps. When finished, the emperor asked his subservient courtiers for their opinion as to the Ornament of the World. With but one exception, all pronounced it perfect. One of the royal princes pointed out that the mosque commanded the palace. The emperor's ready reply to this far-seeing scion of his house was this: "When the empire is so enfeebled that an enemy occupies the Jumma Musjid, never mind about the palace."

The view of the city from the Meerut side of the river is striking and imposing—she looks a city to command an empire; the palace, the old fort of Selimghur, numberless fine tapering minarets, classic fine-shaped mosques,—all rivet attention. The more we study the past history of Delhi, the more we shall understand the springs which act on the vast area of Hindoostan.

Bismillah and Zeenut Begum, attended by Zynooddeen and Indad Ali, started for the tour of the city on the 12th May. They pulled up at the Lahore Gate in a neat palkee gharee, hired for this special occasion. As the party entered the gateway, whose doors were blown in during the siege by a party which formed up at the house opposite, formerly occupied by the eunuch Mahboob Ali, a marked incident occurred.

Bismillah was a little in advance. As she came opposite to the European sentry on duty, she drew herself up with such a royal bearing, and cast such a piercing

glance on the soldier of H. M.'s 88th foot, that he in an instant presented arms. He was sadly roasted by his comrades for having mistaken a black girl for the general; and Tom Jones, No. 3580, was soon known as Black Jones; but he told his chum Pat, in confidence, that he "never felt so queer as when the dark 'un tipped him a glance of her fiery eye." He traced his mistake to a spirit, but his friends fancied he might perhaps have had a drop too much of the mountain dew overnight.

But stop—mark well that glorious vaulted roof: above it there is a room, sacred to the memory of England's martyrs;—there the first British victims fell on the accursed morning of the 11th of May, 1857; the best in Delhi were the first to die, headed by the pastor of the flock.

When the civil service of India has yielded to the crushing blight of envy, let it be told how a Fraser, a Hutchinson, and a Galloway died true to their country. When future generations read, on the time-honoured pages of history, the narrative of the rebellion of 1857, may the conduct of men devoted to their duty animate the student as he bends over them by the midnight lamp. We shall soon run our course; we feel the sands of our hour-glass running out apace; but we shall live in the estimation of future ages. If we pass away, we dissolve in good company—we shall not long survive our gallant brothers in arms, the officers of the Indian army. When the good old master is no more, the servants soon follow.

The party moved on in silence. All had known Fraser

Saheb, the Agent to the Lieutenant-Governor and deplored his loss.

Passing along the fine solidly built corridor, with its double story and chaste vaulted roof, used in the palmy days of the court for its shopkeepers and traders, the party reached a square yard of considerable extent, from which there was an entrance through a fine gateway into the square which contained the Dewan Am, or Court of Public Assembly. It is now occupied by British soldiers as a barrack, the archways having been blocked up. The square affords a fair space for a parade-ground, and after the rebellion, H. M. 60th rifles, which had taken such a prominent part in the siege, might be seen every morning, hard at work, to regain any military polish which might have worn off. The great object of attraction in the palace is, however, the Dewan Khas, or Special Court of Assembly. It is reached by two gateways from the square which contains the Court of Public Assembly, and looks out on to the river. As a visitor stands with his face to the river, he will have the private apartments of the ex-king on one side of the square, the right, and other buildings on the left hand side. The court was always held in the Dewan Khas, and, during the rebellion, the environs of the palace, together with its public offices, were crowded with applicants from all parts of Hindoostan, mostly with a rope round their necks and a petition in their hands; for the proximity of the British besieging force to the city, and the occasional bursting of a shell inside it, reminded the applicant for court favour that the British lion was not far off. A spot may be seen where the minaret or dome, we forget which, of the private apart-

ments of the ex-king, was struck by a shell—a bad omen. The private apartments of the royal family are now occupied by the British officers in charge of the palace, it having been consigned to the keeping of a European garrison. The Dewan Khas is built on a raised stone platform; it is of white marble, and the inside of it is carefully and elaborately adorned with precious stones, which have been carefully inlaid, so as to imitate wreaths of flowers. The building is perfect as to symmetry and adornment. It is to be hoped that it will not be treated with barbaric fury. We used to blame Cromwell's army for the spoliation of our public buildings, and the Mahrattas are still execrated in Delhi for their desecration of everything which boasted of beauty and chaste construction as a work of art. It was in the Dewan Khas that political offenders were tried after the fall of Delhi, and here the ex-king of Delhi had to account for his conduct; particularly so for the murder of British women and children within the very limits of his palace, as directed by an order, written in his own handwriting, on the face of a petition.

Whatever sympathy we, as a nation, may have with fallen royalty, this one barbarous act has excluded the ex-king of Delhi from all claim to our consideration. That kingdom which can commence its struggle for freedom with the murder of women and children deserves not to rise—it has sunk too low in the scale of humanity; it is still barbaric in its component parts, and must be well curbed by the strong rein of civilisation. The good of mankind is the object of government, not the selfish elevation of a despot. We know no more touching scene than the celebration of divine service in the Dewar

Khas after the fall of Delhi. A row of English children sat close to the foot of the throne which had been filled but a short time ago by the Great Mogul; from which he had probably given the order for the murder of the British women and children mentioned above. As the Psalm of the day (cxxiv.) resounded through the Dewan Khas, sung by this row of children, aided by the manly voice of the British soldier (the words are these)—

“Had not the Lord, may Israel say,
 Been pleased to interpose;
Had he not then espoused our cause,
 When men against us rose”—

who could doubt where our real strength lay?

A mosque used by the Mogul family may be seen close by, but our party cared not to see it. The fallen fortunes of the Timonr family were brought thoroughly home to them. The view over the river is pleasant in the rains, but the country on the other side of the river is flat and bare. All were, however, anxious to see the house in which the ex-king was confined, prior to his banishment. It was here that Russell visited him, and after him Sir John Lawrence, accompanied by a host of Punjab followers. He pointed out the Great Mogul to them, and said—“Here is the old chap who has set Hindoostan on fire: see what a miserable creature he is!”

“And what did the old king say?” asked Zeenut Begum.

Indad Ali replied—“Nothing; he merely lifted up his eyes to heaven.”

Bismillah at once fired up, and, with a flashing eye,

stamping on the ground, said—"Do you call that nothing? Our king appealed to heaven!"

Thus, in the late struggle, the Mahomedan construes certain facts in his favour, the Hindoo in his, the Christian in his; but one point we should never lose sight of—it is this: whatever private causes of irritation we may feel as to government measures at various times, we must be true, as Christians, to ourselves, our religion, our country, and our Queen. Let us keep this fixed resolve steadily in view, and the storm will pass quietly over our heads. Let us learn a lesson from the Roman *Coriolanus*: he abandoned revenge,—when on its threshold, bursting into tears, he exclaimed—"Mother, thou hast chosen between Rome and thy son; me thou wilt never see again; may they requite thee for this!" The palace is now being considerably improved: old houses are daily knocked down, rubbish and the like cleared away, and all those arrangements made which so readily suggest themselves to a practical engineer. With the exception of the European garrison, the palace is empty. A fine view of the city is obtained from the magnificent gateways of the palace,—perfection in the way of architecture.

Our party had seen as much as they wished in the palace. One small room in the women's apartments attracted general attention,—they were all loud in their praises of it: here the queen *Zeenut Mahal*, the mother of the intelligent youth, used to live, when residing in the palace.

Zynooddeen, as a good Moslem, objected to the bottles on the table, which he said he thought contained wine. In fact, young *O'Hara*, of the 88th *Connaught rangers*,

had had a few friends to dine with him the night before and had spent a jolly time in the elegant room of Queen Zeenut.

Zeenut Begum remarked that the Feringhees were odd creatures,—“they danced, they sang, they drank wine, were learned, and—brave.”

Bismillah drily remarked,—“It is a pity they are not Moslems: as to our Roostums, they all appear to have become women!”

Once in their palkee gharee, the party drove off to the Begum Garden, in the heart of the city of Delhi. It was royal property prior to the rebellion—a swamp full of trees and jungle. It has now, by the taste and skill of Mr. Berkley, Extra Assistant Commissioner of Delhi, been turned into a most agreeable promenade. On certain days, the bands of the regiments located in Delhi play in it. After the Begum Garden, the old Residency was looked at from a distance. It is now used as a barrack for European soldiers, and the space cleared around it has added much to the beauty of this quarter of the town.

The tree famous in Lord Metcalfe's time has fallen down. As the story goes, a Rissaldar used to assure the Delhi folks that he had interest with the Agent, and would use it, provided his horse, which was tied to a tree in the compound, was only mounted by applicants for court favour. The horse never had any rest during the day,—a constant crowd of suitors worried his life out.

The Magazine is close to the Residency. It has rendered the memory of Willoughby sacred to the page of English history, and was the cause of most of our difficulties during the siege. A correspondence has been

going on for years (about twenty) regarding its removal to a safe place. Sir Charles Napier, with intuitive genius, pointed out its military defects as to position and construction ; but all in vain—all in vain : there it stands, with a churchyard on one side of it—to protect it, perhaps, and help people to mount on the tombstones, and so on over the wall. There are two points at which Delhi is notoriously insecure : its Magazine is filled with lakhs' worth of military stores, without sufficient military protection ; and European cavalry are located at Meerut, forty miles off : they can come over to Delhi if required, is the invariable reply. Now, when the tranquillity of India depends in a great measure on keeping Delhi safe and secure, we urge, with all the importance which attaches itself to so vital a subject, that the Magazine should be safely located, and European cavalry stationed at Delhi. Let Sir William Mansfield, the Commander-in-Chief of Bombay, inform the public what he advised Her Majesty's Government in this matter when Chief of the Staff to Lord Clyde.*

The widening of the streets of Delhi will enable artillery to command them for the future ; but European artillery should be supported by European cavalry, not by Native, in times of popular tumult.

The Cashmere Gate is still in a ruined state ; the breach to the right and left is still perceptible. If a traveller will place himself at a little distance from the City Gate, he will thus be near the spot where many gallant Englishmen fell during the siege : the energetic Fagan was struck down cheering on his men in the left

* The Magazine has now been removed.

hand battery close to the Custom House; Salkeld was mortally wounded in his successful attempt to blow in the Cashmere Gate; Nicholson was mortally wounded in a narrow lane inside the gate of the city—if a visitor turns to the right, and follows the city wall after he has entered the Cashmere Gate, he will reach the fatal spot. A little higher up the road on the left-hand side, after leaving the city, a sacred spot will attract the attention of every admirer of gallant men: there rest the mortal remains of Nicholson, Salkeld, Greathed, Clifford, and of many other noble men—the Indian army may well be proud of her sons. Further up the road, we reach the Old Cantonments, now a mass of ruins, formerly the scene of many pleasant parties and convivial meetings. But there is a spot—we mark it well,—in which, during the siege, the tent of one of England's bravest sons was pitched. As you faced that of the general, it was on the left hand side of the street. As we mention Hodson's name, his form seems to rise from the earth—so bright, so cheerful, so manly, so daring; his charger at the tent door, impatient for the strife. Who so ready for the battle, who so cool in it, as Hodson? Was it that fame envied the amalgamated force the possession of a Nicholson and a Hodson, that she allowed death to snatch them away—beacons for ages to come,—bright jewels of the Indian army? We have our casket, to show to the defamer of the Indian army: as we open it, all is hushed in death; we tread on the graves of departed warriors!

CHAPTER V.

A VISIT to the Kootub was fixed for the 14th of May. It is the watering-place of Delhi. At daybreak, the Lahore Gate was reached; from it a metal road leads to the Kootub. The character of the country to the south of Delhi is essentially different from that to the north, after the limits of the Old Cantonments have been passed. The ground is intersected by low ranges of hills, and the whole country is cut up by ravines. On the space between Delhi and the Kootub, city after city has been built, peopled, and has passed away; their prior existence being attested by vast ruins, covering an area of fifty or sixty miles square. After quitting the Lahore Gate, the suburb of Pahargunj will lie on the right hand. The distance of the Kootub may be estimated as eight or ten miles; half-way, the tomb of Sufdar Jung attracts attention, built in the midst of a fine large walled garden. Here the air is considered much better than that of Delhi, and it is used as a sanitarium. Opposite to Sufdar Jung's, the small town of Shah Murdan is worth seeing. Humayoon's tomb may be seen in the distance. It was from this place that Major Hodson made his noted capture of the ex-king of Delhi. The Kootub is celebrated for its fine pillar,—the highest, probably, in the world,—built of red stone, and covered with Arabic inscriptions. Its builder's name is, oddly enough, unknown, and its origin a subject of endless dispute: the Hindoos claim it for their race, the Mahomedans for theirs. There is also the famous iron pillar, whose end is said to rest on a ser-

pent's head ;—whoever can throw it down rules Hindoostan. The Mahrattas fired a cannon against it, but the pillar held its own. The royal family of Delhi had their palaces at the Kootub, and resorted to them for change of air, especially during the rains, when all Delhi came out to celebrate the Feast of Flowers.

Khoja Saheb is a famous shrine, and the burial-place of many distinguished Mahomedan families. Many of the tombs are of chaste and elegant designs, and elaborately carved. Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, Bart., the Agent to the Lieutenant-Governor, built a fine house close to the Kootub pillar ; it commands a wild and historical prospect. As the visitor passes on beyond the Kootub pillar, he will be struck with an English inscription, on a pillar, of—"Private Road of the King of Delhi." About three miles from the Kootub, the traveller will meet with many of the noted men of Delhi in the safe custody of the guardians of the tombs of Nizam-ooddeen,—men who, in their day, played a conspicuous part in the history of Hindoostan.

The ruined city of Toglakabad, the whim of a former king, is about five miles from the Kootub. Prior to the rebellion, the road to the Kootub was always crowded with Native visitors ; fine gardens had been planted along it by the wealthy residents of Delhi : they have now paid the penalty of want of water and ruined masters.

But the Kootub is essentially a place to be alone in, to ponder on departed greatness. As we stand at the top of the Kootub pillar, we see Delhi in the distance, also the river Jumna ; masses of ruins far and near. Emperor after emperor lies buried at our feet ; also

viziers, generals, poets, and a host of others. With so much to remind the Mahomedans of Delhi and its neighbourhood of what they have been, it is not surprising that the descendants of men once great, now paupers, should always look with interest on a disturbed political horizon, as likely to bring them a change of fortune. It is from this class of pauperised Mahomedans that our Hindoostanee irregular cavalry are principally recruited. Their past ancestral traditions must always lead them to contrast a state of independence and influence in past ages, as enjoyed by their forefathers, with their own present impoverished condition : they ought to be thankful for what they enjoy under the British Government ; but human nature is somewhat perverse.

Bismillah was sensibly affected by all she saw. It appeared as if the royal line of Timour had passed away for ever. She felt her pride hurt, and gladly caught at any passing shadow likely to reassure her. It was at this point that Zynooddeen came to her assistance with his historical store of knowledge. He traced the course of Timour, of Baber, and of Humayoon, for her, in vivid colours. The latter emperor was an exile for fifteen years, still he again sat on the throne of his forefathers. Delhi had risen from the sword of a Nadir Shah, and from the scourge of the Mahrattas. If Delhi were cast into the sea, still she would live on the page of history : "Your highness must allow your slave to sing the praises of your ancestors," said Zynooddeen.

Although the late rebellion has taught a severe lesson to many of the present generation, still the strong impulses of hope slumber not. "Ready, aye ready!"

should be our motto. After the rebellion, at a Native festival, a famous Delhi singer was present. She was not young,—by no means prepossessing in her appearance,—had been rich, but, having been plundered, became for a time insane. She was asked to sing. She cast a withering look on the crowd of Punjabees collected around her, and sang some of her most pathetic Delhi and Lucknow songs. The Hindoostanee audience almost wept as the thrill of her fine voice sounded in the still air of an Indian summer evening. The words—

“For Alim, my dear prince’s sake,
I’ve wander’d far, from Delhi to Mooltan”—

found a responsive chord in many a heart. But the voice is now silent for ever: the grave has claimed its own—the sweet songstress of Shahjehanabad is dead.

CHAPTER VI.

AT 4 o’clock, P.M., on the 15th of May, 1860, two dāk carriages of the Inland Transit Company drew up at Bismillah’s door. The horses were thin, addicted to rearing, difficult to start,—but, when once off, Khoda Buksh blew his horn like a man. He had been a bugler in one of the mutinous corps prior to the rebellion; and having escaped hanging by the clemency of the amnesty, declared he would for the rest of his life serve the British Government faithfully, for—his own profit. He aimed at an air of civilisation: he wore a cast-off infantry jacket, Native trowsers, with a pair of

old Wellington boots drawn over them, and a black velvet cap with a gold tassel. His horn was, however, his source of fame: he knew how to use it politically. For the General Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner he assigned the tune of "God save the Queen;" for the Delhi mission, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains" was always ready; for Mr. Squib, Mrs. Squib, and the Misses Squib, he always blew "If a body kiss a body, need a body tell?" out of respect to the prying character of the family of the local press; for the old Pandys corps, or rather for the loyal soldiers of staunch Native corps, as well as for Delhi's swell Natives, he declared "The Rogue's March" was the proper thing; for the mess of the 88th Connaught rangers, located in Skinner's fine house, it was "Cheer boys, Cheer," "The three jolly Post-boys," or "We won't go home till morning;" for European soldiers the tune always was "Rule Britannia." With the salutation in broken English of "All right sars!" a cock of his eye was very useful in making up to the British soldier. Thus, with the big men, Khoda Buksh was a loyal fellow; with the mission, a hopeful fellow: with disloyal Natives, their bad *kismet*; with the officers of the 88th, a jolly dog; with the soldiers, a regular Christian nigger.

All were soon seated, Bismillah in one carriage, with her nurse, and Indad Ali on the coach-box close to Khoda Buksh, and Zeenut Begum in the other, with Zynooddeen on the coach-box. The name of Brown shone conspicuous on the roof—who could doubt the loyalty of the party quitting Delhi? With a rear, a plunge, a push, and a blow, off started Bismillah's carriage, and Zeenut Begum's soon followed.

Up the Silver Street, a turn to the left, past the Begum's Garden, past the Residency, and a Native cart in the way checked the progress of Bismillah's vehicle. On the road stood Rory O'More, of the 88th foot, Popkins, the Deputy Commissioner, and the kotwal of the city, just opposite to the Church (originally built by Colonel Skinner).

Rory O'More held Popkins's hand, and asked inquiringly from the civil-authority—"Have you got your fellows in the city well in hand; do you know when they will kick, rear, or plunge,—in fact, have you got your eyes open?"

Popkins smiled—as only a civilian on good pay can smile,—and said: "My dear Rory, political matters should not be the subject of after-tiffin jests. The Government place implicit confidence in me (as seen by my drawing Rs. 1500 per mensem). My kotwal keeps me well informed of the state of feeling in the city: an honest, open fellow he is."

"Kotwal!" said Popkins—"what news to-day?"

The kotwal trembled when he saw Indad Ali, and felt that he must make a show of loyalty. He fell, therefore, at Popkins's feet, clasped them, and said,—“May your highness' life be long, and may you rise to be a lord! Your slave, this mean and insignificant thing, like dust on your blessed shoes, is intent day and night on the work of the Sirkar; not a mouse can move in Delhi without my knowledge. All's well! How could it be otherwise, when Popkins Saheb's name is feared from one side of Delhi to the other?"

Popkins felt an honest glow of conscious dignity. He

wished O'More good-bye, who strongly urged him to have a peg.

Popkins objected, with the grave remark,—“ Captain O'More, if the Punjab Government knew that I, Mr. Popkins, took pegs at the mess-house of the 88th foot, I should be sent to——Jhung!” (the penal civil station of the Punjab).

Captain O'More went quietly to his own rooms, called for his servant Smith, a soldier of his own corps, and said—“ A peg!”

The sparkling liquor in the crystal glass soon disappeared. O'More's eye looked brighter, and he remarked,—“ The most thirsty thing I know is talking to a civilian—so green, so soft, so puffed up, so insufferably ignorant!”

Smith at once assented, and said,—“ All will go on well in India as long as——”

“ You have a peg: fill the glass!” replied Captain O'More.

Smith made the usual military salute, and said—“ Long life to your honour!”

Which was the greenest—O'More, who muddled his brains with pegs, or Popkins, who had none to muddle?

How little Europeans know of Natives!—and yet all civilians can tell you the most astounding stories of *their* honest Native establishments, and *their own* great insight into the sentiments of the people. It is all—bosh!

The Native cart had got out of the way; Khoda Buksh blew his horn for the Squib party, to the tune of “ If a body kiss a body, need a body tell?” Indad Ali put his hand to his throat, and looked pleasantly at the kotwal,

who salaamed submissively. Miss Squib ordered her coachman to give Khoda Buksh a cut with the whip. He was too sharp, however, and dashed through the Cashmere Gate.

On, on,—past the house formerly occupied by Sir John Lawrence; the long wall, now ruined, which protected the fine but now desolate estate of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, pleasantly situated on the banks of the Jumna, has been left behind. On, on—past the Old Cantonments, and their sad reminiscences, and the open country has been reached—flat and desolate, as far as scenery is concerned, until Umballa is reached. There are, however, a few points of interest to be noted.

Our party is now fairly on its way to Cashmere. So thought Indad Ali, as he replied to Khoda Buksh's inquiry of where he was bound for by the lines of—

“Who has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere,
With its roses, the brightest that earth ever gave?”

CHAPTER VII.

THE high road from Delhi to Lahore is for the most part Macadamised; it is wide, and in good order. It afforded us a secure base for our operations before Delhi in 1857. As far as Kurnaul, the road lies between the Jumna river and a canal whose windings are clearly perceptible by the rows of trees planted along it. The ground between these two boundaries is flat and swampy. The trip to Lahore occupies four days, travelling with

comfort; two at railroad speed. In a snug way, the first halting-place will be Kurnaul: here the proper limits of the Punjab commence, and the character, dress, religion, and caste of the people change. The province is known as that of the Cis-Sutlej States; it has for years past been under British protection. It was Maharaja Runjeet Sing's policy and aim to seize it, but the British Government prevented his doing so. Whilst the rebellion spread at once to the south of Delhi, it was checked on the borders of the Punjab; the races of that Presidency have little or no sympathy with those of Hindoostan.

It would therefore appear to be an error, as regards sound policy, the annexation of the Delhi division to the Presidency of the Punjab; it should remain attached to that of Agra. Another violation of the rules of sound policy appears to be the enlisting regiments of mixed classes, such as Goorkhas, Sikhs, Pathans, Rajpoots, Jats, and Mahrattas: they soon lose their distinctive qualities—they become, as it were Hindoostaneised, for the rough man of the Punjab cannot stand the quiet satire of the Hindoostance as to dress and food. The difference in the men who left the Punjab, rough and ready, a few years since, is already perceptible. It is also a mistake making men serve out of their own Presidency; they should be allowed to serve in it, and permitted as little intercourse as possible with the other Presidencies. The Punjab is large enough to provide for a judicious location of her Native troops; the change of a regiment from Peshawur to Umballa is quite far enough to allow of local interests being encountered. Another point must also be mentioned—it is this: Na-

tive troops should constantly be moved; the life of a regiment in camp is far better than that of one in cantonments: the Native is fond of change, and has the strong characteristics of barbarism still at work in his breast. Maharaja Runjeet Sing used to say that his soldiers always got turbulent in cantonments. The irregular system, which finds so many advocates in these days, is very well as long as there is no fighting: as soon as war commences, the officers are killed, and the corps supplied with others, who, being unknown to the men, have no influence with them. This was very apparent during the late war. Give a commanding officer plenty of power, and plenty of European officers, together with a liberal supply of non-commissioned European officers.

The reason why men of different races are not well classed together, is apparent from the different treatment they require, and amount of drill. A Pathan from the frontier is spoiled by too much drill; he is a soldier from his birth. Many a corps has its heart broken by too much drill, and its purse emptied by too much dressing. What does a mercenary serve for except the pay?—decrease that, and you lessen his loyalty.

Five or six miles from Delhi the Serai of Budlee meets the eye. It was near this place that General Barnard gained his first victory over the rebels, on the 8th June, 1857. Close to the Serai a gallant young officer met his death—Delamain, of the 56th Native infantry. It was at this battle that Brigadier Showers, C.B., led on H. M. 75th Foot against the rebels' guns with his well-known dauntless courage.

The fate of India has often been decided close to Paneeput, a town about fifty miles from Delhi.

The Native chiefs in the vicinity of Kurnaul did good service during the troubles of 1857. Ahmed Ali Khan, Nawab of Kurnaul, was most active in our cause; the Rajah of Jheend, a man of gigantic proportions; the Rajah of Puttiala, a chief of great influence and wealth, and the Rajah of Nubbee.

Umballa was the head quarters of the agency as constituted in the time of Sir George Clerk, the present Governor of Bombay. It was here that he rapidly rose to notice, distinction, and fame. The house he occupied in the Badshahi Garden is now turned into an office. Umballa, on becoming a large military station in 1843-44, quite ruined Kurnaul: it is now deserted, except by a few civilians, who mope about and get fever—and wigs from the Punjab Government. Umballa will be the second night's journey; Loodiana the third—celebrated for its shawls, of an inferior quality as compared with those of Cashmere. A long trip will bring the traveller to Lahore *via* Umritsur. The latter place is the head quarters of the Sikh religion—the point from which the Sikhs, as a body, are moved, for good or bad.

On the road, Khoda Buksh asked Indad Ali whether he clearly understood the recent changes in the Government of the country. Upon Indad Ali replying "No," Khoda Buksh explained the point: "You know that John Company Saheb Bahadoor was an old fellow; he had no heirs; he therefore married Queen Victoria!"

Indad Ali now clearly saw, that after all the fuss which had been made, the change in the Government was only nominal. He thanked Khoda Buksh, who felt the power of knowledge,—he expressed it by a cock of his eye.

“And what about the civil service of India, and the Indian army, Khoda Buksh?”

Khoda Buksh opened his eyes quite wide, stared at Indad Ali, and smilingly said,—“They, you know, could not marry Queen Victoria; and as Her Majesty already has a British army, and an enlightened bar,—her own sons,—why, I suppose they must go to—pot!”

Both carriages drove into the court-yard of a house, which had been hired for a day or two, at Lahore; and seeing a Pandi soldier, Khoda Buksh blew the “Rogue’s March.”

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN CHARLES ORLANDO DELARÉ was twenty-five years old at the time we write of; handsome, generous, clever, well-educated, and brave. In addition to a sound English education, he had, through the care of a near relative—for he was an orphan,—spent a considerable time abroad, and acquired a full theoretical, and indeed practical, acquaintance with the profession of arms, in all its branches. He was a good engineer, artilleryman, cavalry and infantry officer; he had also acquired a polish abroad, from the acquisition of the French and German languages, speaking them both with fluency and a correct accent. Dancing, music, and drawing completed our hero’s education. The galleries of the Louvre, Dresden, and Florence had been visited, and it was thus DeLaré was urged on to paint with taste of design and colouring. As regards a military education,

complete in all its branches, the American officers excel those of the British army; we still have room for improvement. But with all his advantages of education, there were two weights which dragged DeLaré down: he was poor; and, must it be told—he was also a little dark,—he had Native Indian blood in his veins. As to poverty, that might be overcome; but who can wash out the taint of blood? As long as DeLaré was young, he did not much care about the nickname of Black Laré; but when grown up, he gradually felt the full force of the slighting remarks made in general conversation as to persons of mixed blood. No nation is probably made up of so many mixed races as Great Britain—none so intolerant of black blood. Poverty sent DeLaré out to India in the Company's army, and his taint of dark blood made him somewhat reserved, until he knew his associates—he cared not for the excitement of general society. Prior to starting for India, DeLaré questioned his guardian with very considerable hesitation as to his ancestors. Mr. Willoughby, an old retired Bengal civilian, at once, with intuitive tact, saw where the shoe pinched, and said—"You need not be ashamed of your grandmother! She was a princess of the Timour family. Your grandfather carried her off from the palace, and married her at Agra. Her name was 'The Pearl.'"

DeLaré winced a little at this recital, for he had often heard it jocularly remarked by English people, that all old Indians with a dash of the tar-brush claimed a pedigree from a princess of some family or other.

When the rebellion broke out, DeLaré was in charge of a district near Delhi, as Deputy Commissioner. He had, from his abilities and application, risen rapidly, and

held a well-merited position in the opinion of Government; but his social qualities had not improved,—he had lived much in the jungles, as it is styled, and had become indifferent to society, except as enjoyable in the free interchange of thought between a few choice friends. When the news of the fatal 11th of May, 1857, reached DeLaré, he met the storm with perfect coolness, and made all his arrangements with admirable presence of mind. In his attempts to make a stand, and weather the storm, he was ably seconded by his Christian subordinates. Amongst them, his head clerk was particularly active. As soon as he heard of the news, he buckled on a long sword, loaded with pistols, stuck them into his belt, slung his rifle over his shoulder, lit a cigar, put on his wide-awake hat, and walked over to DeLaré's house, whistling an opera air.

Mr. DeSouza was a country-born—a half-caste. He had been bred in a camp, and, up to the age of eighteen, could neither read nor write. He possessed abilities and resolution; and by the time we meet with him for the first time, at the age of thirty-two, he was a well-educated man—self-taught, it is true, but this was creditable to his industry and zeal.

Mr. DeSouza first served in the Company's artillery, as a bugler, and was present during the battles of the first and second Sikh wars. He then left the army, and served as a writer in various offices. He was fairly read in general history, and English poetry; possessed an accurate knowledge of geography, and had enthusiastically devoted himself to botany, even in the burning plains of India. He was an excellent accountant, a good rider, and a dead shot. He was dainty about the

master under whom he served—"It put his blood into a ferment," he used to say, "to copy out the rubbish written by some of his superiors. To a civilian of the old school, all liver and no brains, he would have been as bad as a fit of apoplexy—as much dreaded as cholera. When Mr. DeSouza brought an ill-written rough copy to Mr. Lushington, and asked him whether a "which" should not be a "who," an "is" an "are," and objected to a simile as too florid or too poor, then the civil blood would rise; but who could resist Mr. DeSouza's big books, which were brought to the charge? It was no good; alterations must be made, and that too in the face of the whole court.

Mr. DeSouza was lean, lanky—hardly an ounce of flesh on his bones,—and spoke with a voice which appeared to have succumbed to a succession of colds and sore-throats.

"Well, Captain DeLaré, here I am!" said Mr. DeSouza.

"Glad to see you," said Captain DeLaré.

At Captain DeLaré's request, Mr. DeSouza seated himself, and appeared quite comfortable and happy.

"How long shall we be able to hang on, Sir?" asked Mr. DeSouza.

"Not long, I am afraid!" said Captain DeLaré.

"Well, then, I'll give my nag an extra feed of corn," said Mr. DeSouza.

Mr. DeSouza's nag had hardly finished its corn, when it became evident that a bolt must be made. Captain DeLaré, attended by his head clerk, his covenanted assistant Mr. Currie, and a trusty Native horseman, left his station for Agra, amidst a shower of bullets and

stones, poured on the party by the well-wishers of the Company's Government. The compliment was immediately returned, and several rebels bit the dust. The party moved on. Mr. DeSouza lit his cigar, and remarked—"Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit!"

* * * * *

Three years had passed since Captain DeLaré had quitted his station, when we find him again quietly seated in his bungalow. He had escaped, had suffered much, and had gone through endless adventures.

Mr. DeSouza brought him the *Government Gazette*, in which the names of those officers who had distinguished themselves during the rebellion were mentioned. He searched in vain for DeLaré's name.

"Can't find it, Sir!"

"Not find what?"

"Your name, Sir!"

Captain DeLaré felt that cold chill come over him which only those can describe who have felt it. His simple reply was—"Read Napier's Life, Mr. DeSouza—and take a glass of wine!"

A few days afterwards, Mr. DeSouza noted, amongst the public letters, one from the Secretary to the Punjab Government; it ran thus:—"I regret that your name should not have appeared in the *Gazette* announcing the rewards bestowed on officers who distinguished them-

selves during the rebellion. The simple truth is, that owing to a clerical error, the name of Popkins was inserted for that of DeLaré. Alas! Popkins is now a—C.B.!

Popkins' wife is a first-cousin of the Military Secretary to the Punjab Government; and Popkins never indulges in—pegs, has no brains, and was so cautious during the mutiny that he never saw a shot fired.

DeLaré now determined to take leave for six months to Cashmere—he was fairly disgusted. His leave was granted, and he set off for this land of promise in the month of May, 1860.

* * * * *

And now as to DeLaré's grandmother, "The Pearl." His connection with her made him cousin to Bismillah. Not that he had ever heard of Bismillah; but it was known in the palace that the Feringhee who ruled the district of Shahpoor had the blood of a Timour in his veins. This circumstance was one of the many secrets known to Indad Ali.

Captain DeLaré had, however, met Bismillah. A crowd of fugitives was leaving the city of Delhi after the 14th September, 1857, and a Sikh soldier had laid violent hands on a young Mahomedan girl of extreme beauty—a mere child,—whilst others fled. This child turned round like a young tigress, and said to the soldier—"Touch me at your peril!" The Sikh soldier

was drawing the trigger of his musket when a bullet from DeLaré's revolver put an end to the monster. DeLaré passed on, and almost forgot the incident. Not so Bismillah : she remembered DeLaré's face, and trembled when she thought that she owed her life to a Christian ; she knew not the sympathy of blood—how, unknown to ourselves, it draws us together ; we struggle with it, we battle against it, but it overcomes us in spite of ourselves.

DeLaré found himself at Lahore, at the dâk bungalow, on the morning of the 18th of May, 1860.

Bismillah arrived at her lodgings in the city on the same date.

Mr. DeSouza remained at Shahpoor, "unable," as he said, "to rise in the service, in consequence of the prejudice which stuck to his mixed blood, and envy on the part of old civilians, who disliked—brains!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE office of Secretary to the Lahore Government was on the 18th of May, 1860, filled by Mr. Green Poppy,—a *Wala*, or, in other words, a Competitioner. He had reached India at the moment when her fortunes were ebbing—during 1857. He was one of those choice pieces of humanity which Britannia, in anguish, had torn from her own breast, and placed on that of her sable daughter Hindoostan. Poppy had arrived in India late in the day: he viewed the Pagoda Tree with horror—it was dried up and withered!—that pleasant tree, under which civilians and military men used to collect in the cool of the morning, drink coffee, and return home to order—curricles to the door. All that Poppy can now do—and he has been directed to devote his spare hours to the duty—is to engrave, with one of those sharp knives sent up by the Superintendent of Stationery at Calcutta at immense cost, on the trunk of the old pagoda tree—

ARMS BILL.

INCOME TAX. LICENSE TAX.

PAPER CURRENCY.

Cut by GREEN POPPY, Esq.,

Bengal Civil Service.

SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB.

N.B.—A Competitioner of the Year 1857, who rose to his present honourable post by his—Merits.

If you meet an Englishman wandering about the country in India in the morning, looking like an office-man, he is sure to be a competitioner. No one appears to claim him: he is too learned for the old style of civilians, and too scedy for the royals to associate with. If you want a pleasant travelling friend, never choose a Wala—he is like a lady with a butterfly-net in her hand, always ready to capture a poor flutterer when he fancies that his bright morning of existence will last a long time; a Wala has you in his toils before you can look round. He is always prowling about the bazars of India, like Socrates at Athens, and nothing pleases him better than to have upset and destroyed the theories of a sudden judge before breakfast. Would that he could clear off all old judges—he would then indeed confer a benefit on society: but a Wala is bold with measures, and rather timid with men—he hardly knows his place.

Mr. Poppy was one day asked to dine at the mess of the 79th Highlanders. He begged to be excused, on the plea that “only *gentlemen* were accustomed to go to the mess.” Since Mr. Poppy has become Secretary, he tries to joke off the matter, by saying, “You know I have a Mrs. Poppy [with red hair], and only bachelors should, I am told, go to mess!” We fear Mr. Poppy has been guilty of a quibble; but then he is a competition man, and they do strange things.

The competition man does not belong to any party in India: as the timid Hindoo stands at the court-house door on one leg, with a straw in his mouth, and pleads for justice, so the competitioner is beginning to wail over his desolate lot, and pathetically styles himself a

“pelican in the wilderness.” There is a fine strong fellow, who wishes to give this pelican a good rap on the head, and send him to the right about pretty sharp—the English bar.

* * * * *

Captain Charles Orlando DeLaré found Mr. Green Poppy with a pen in his hand, the end of it closely pressed by his teeth—looking hot, and his eyes inflamed. The paper on which he had been writing was still wet. A letter ran thus:—

“To C. POPKINS, Esq., C.B.

“SIR,—I am directed by the Honorable the Lieutenant-Governor to express his honor’s regret that you should have been guilty of the outrageous neglect of allowing a party of fugitives to leave the city without your knowledge on the 15th of May, 1860: on that date your private telegraphic message says—‘All right!’ This information has been communicated to Government by a most respectable Mahomedan gentleman of good family named Mirza Mahomed Shah, a resident of Delhi; he states that the party has proceeded to Lucknow, for political purposes.

“2. In consequence of your neglect of duty, you are banished to—Jhung!

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) “GREEN POPPY,

“Secretary Punjab Government.”

“N.B.—No applications in your behalf from Mrs. Popkins will be attended to.”

Our old friend Indad Ali had paid a morning visit to Poppy; hence this effusion.

When Captain DeLaré was seated, and about to open the sore subject of his C.B.-ship, a fawning chuprassee announced a mem saheb—a madam—an English lady,—in fact, Mrs. Popkins,—a pretty, fair-haired English lady.

Mr. Poppy felt very sick, and tried to conceal his letter with a piece of blotting-paper. Mrs. Popkins at once, with female delicacy, took the delightful document in her hand, and seeing Popkins' name at the head of it, read it, smiled, and said—"Quite a mistake, Mr. Poppy. I have to-day heard from Sir Marmaduke Popkins, G.C.B., F.R.S. He speaks of your father very kindly, and says that he has advanced him a sum quite sufficient to re-establish his paper-mill, which was burnt down last year." Mrs. Popkins then tore up the obnoxious letter, smiling kindly on Poppy; and, placing a pen in his hand, said—"Write!"—

"Telegraphic Message—Urgent.

"To C. POPKINS, Esq.

"You are appointed Commissioner of Peshawur: start at once!"

Poppy wrote in a tremble. Mrs. Popkins folded up the precious paper, wished Poppy good-bye, and seeing DeLaré idle, and a handsome man, she took his arm, walked away with him to her carriage, and asked him to

tiffin at the house at which she was a visitor. DeLaré could not refuse. When seated, Mrs. Popkins said—“That horrid Poppy!—to use my dear Popkins so badly,—a man devoted to his country! But I know how to deal with a Wala!—the vulgar creatures: they can never face a lady!”

DeLaré sighed.

“What did you go to Poppy about?” said Mrs. Popkins, kindly.

“About my C.B.-ship,” said DeLaré.

“Take my advice,” said Mrs. Popkins, in a sly tone:—“you will never get on in India without a dear, pretty—wife! Marry! Where would Popkins have been without me?—at——Jhung!”

Mrs. Popkins burst into tears: the struggle with Mr. Green Poppy had been too much for her, although victorious. But she had forgotten her pocket handkerchief,—she appealed to DeLaré for his. It was returned next day, nicely washed, ironed, perfumed, and, must we say, embroidered with—

“CHARLES ORLANDO DELARE!

NEVER TRUST

TO YOUR POWERS OF ELOQUENCE WITH POPPY,

BUT

MARRY A CLEVER PRETTY WIFE,

AS RECOMMENDED BY

ERNESTA SYLVESTER ISABELLA POPKINS.”

CHAPTER X.

THE Punjab is a magnificent territory : it possesses bold mountain ranges, fine well watered plains, and broad rivers ; it can boast of wealthy cities, many of them handsome, and worthy of a traveller's attention ; it is peopled by hardy and industrious subjects, handsome, bold, and open-hearted ; its chiefs are, many of them, models of manly beauty—fiery, admirable soldiers. There are two things which the Punjab Government much wants—Scinde, and a little modesty. With the addition of Scinde to the limits of the Punjab, what a magnificent governorship it would form ; how the heart of Sir Charles Napier would again beat with animated pulsation, could he see Kurrachce what he predicted she would one day be—a great port ! With modesty, the Punjab Government* would rise on eagles' wings ; if she would only consent, like the Negress girl, to wear her Sunday dress on alternate days with her sister at Agra, the world would not think the worse of her. Since the Sikh Government fell, and the flag of England took its stand on the citadel of Lahore, the country has improved wonderfully, and the general system of

* The Punjab Government has always had the defect of too much self-praise ; it is an admirably-managed province, and its present Lt.-Governor, Sir Donald Macleod, is emblematic of the spirit which animates all State affairs ; he is one of the most attractive characters which our Indian system has produced.

administration is very creditable to the abilities of those who have raised it. The people of the country are fully impressed with the advantages of a good Government, and we reaped the fruits of justice in 1857, when the Punjab so nobly responded to the call to arms. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Punjab: may her chiefs increase in wealth, and sound principles—the attendants of a liberal and enlightened education.

Bismillah was anxious to see all the sights of Lahore—the place where Runjeet Singh lived, and was burnt, with his wives and slave girls; the place where Maharajah Nao Nehal Singh was killed, immediately after he had attended the funeral of his father Maharajah Kurruk Singh; the fatal garden where Maharajah Shere Sing was so treacherously murdered; the spot where the Prime Minister Dhyan Singh fell mortally wounded: the room in which old Zamman Shah was almost starved to death by the cunning old Runjeet Singh, before he would part with the Koh-i-Noor—now a bright Jewel of the Crown of England!

Bismillah saw everything there was to be seen at Lahore, through the admirable arrangements of Indad Ali. He pointed out the old residency, formerly occupied by Sir Henry Lawrence; the house built by Sir John Lawrence; the one in which Sir Robert Montgomery used to live; the new cantonments of Meer Meer were inspected, dirty, unfinished, and desolate. All admired the fine church—a conspicuous object. It only now remained for Bismillah to see the Lieutenant-Governor; and he was pointed out by Indad Ali, as he took his evening ride, attended by a single aide-de-camp.

Bismillah was pleased with the appearance of the ruler of the Punjab, and remarked,—“How simply these English hakims move about !”

But what most pleased Bismillah was a general parade for the Pattiala Rajah. As General Wyndham, the hero of the Redan, dashed up on a superb charger, richly caparisoned, attended by a brilliant staff, a salute was fired in his honour, and the troops presented arms, the bands striking up “God save the Queen.” Then it was that Bismillah saw England’s power, as regiment after regiment passed by with a firm step and a gallant bearing. She turned to Indad Ali, and said,—“Happy the Queen who can command the services of men like these ! I now feel that the race of Timour never can again rise as long as Hindoostan is held by such Rootums”—and then, woman-like, she wept !

But relief was at hand : Mr. Green Poppy came thundering over the parade, holding on by the pommel of his saddle ; the horse on which he rode stopped short, and Poppy laid a suppliant at Bismillah’s feet ! She drew her veil over her face, and laughed !

As soon as she recovered, she said—“Foolish the nation which sends a man to India who cannot ride a donkey ; still more foolish the Government of India, which, having discovered his weakness, makes him a Secretary.”

Poppy returned home, broken-kneed, and sadly out of condition.

* * * * *

The trip to Bhimber, a frontier post of the Jumoo territory, occupies three days by palkee dâk ; the metal road stops short at Lahore. On the 21st of May, our Delhi travellers arrived there. What a change, from the dusty plains to the pure, fragrant, balmy air of Bhimber, upon which the cool breeze blows noiselessly, direct from the everlasting, the immortal, the towering peaks of the snow-capped Peer Pinjal Mountains !

CHAPTER XI.

“The want of occupation is not rest ;
A mind quite vacant is a mind distrest.”

BISMILLAH slumbered on quietly, sweetly, refreshingly—a peculiar blessing, only vouchsafed to youth ; for as years roll on, the cares of the world trespass on the golden hours of sleep—our dreams are disturbed with the vulgar cares of life. But, in youth, we wander in our dreams amongst the emerald and velvet-like fields of Fairy Land. Bismillah occupied a small hill-tent ; it had been pitched for her in a few minutes by Indad Ali, under a fine shady, lofty chenar tree, the plane tree of the Bosphorus ; a dhari, or carpet of blue and white, spread over the soft turf, was a manufacture of Agra. A charpoy or bed was occupied by Bismillah, its legs adorned with paintings on a green ground : there were

elephants with magnificent trappings—horses with tails which, if measured by a practical surveyor, would be as ten miles compared with one mile of body—birds with plumages so brilliant, so gay, and so curiously formed, that it would take the ornithologist years to class them properly—dancing men and dancing women—and flowers of all colours, formed into the most impracticable garlands. The feet of the charpoy was also ornamented with tassels of red silk, enlivened with gold tissue. There were sheets and pillows to the bed, and a railing at its head to prevent their falling off. The coverlet was of fine red and crimson Lahore silk, trimmed with a fringe of green and a broad border of yellow.

Zeenut Begum was also provided with a bed, in a separate tent. The nurse Kareeman slept at the door of Bismillah's tent. All these precautions had been taken at the advice of a friend, who said—"Beware of the fleas on the road to Cashmere, which infest all the houses used for the accommodation of travellers."

Now as to Bismillah's education: she had received none, or nearly so. She had, as to reading, been taught to read the Koran: it was a pretty sight to watch her hour after hour trying to master chapter after chapter of this sacred book; she swung her body backwards and forwards, as the book or Koran sharif lay on the ground before her. But, alas! she hardly understood the meaning of a single passage; she committed the words to memory, but they conveyed no new ideas to her mind. The Mahomedan Native lady of Hindoostan has hardly any, if any, opportunity of improving her mind from external objects: born in a zenana, in the midst of a

crowded city, brought up there from year to year, restricted to the society of a few select friends—youth is gradually swallowed up by old age; years have been passed in sleeping, eating, drinking, and dressing; and thus, generation after generation passes away, without any moral improvement. There can be no study of nature in a bricked-up courtyard. The sun shines; the wind blows; it is cold or hot; the shadows on the courtyard change as season after season passes away; the sands of life run out apace,—and then comes the grave. Englishwomen, even if they do not read much, and especially Londoners, have many external objects to amuse them: a walk, a drive, a ball, a dinner; a visit to a museum, to the opera, the theatre; to a concert, a missionary meeting, church, or the sea-side, and so on. A Mahomedan lady generally talks well; she can mould her language to all those polite forms of expression which are in such repute in the East; her words are well chosen, and their intonation musical and attractive. Family pedigrees are always at her finger ends, and her memory is invariably well stocked with past and present gossip; her knowledge of history is derived from oral communication; she also has wonderful legends to recount, and sundry stories of ghosts and evil spirits.

That Native ladies are capable of taking a part in politics, is proved by a perusal of Indian history; and in our own days, we can mention the Queen of Jhansi,* who died fighting gallantly when her soldiers fled;—we

* The Queen of Jhansi is now supposed not to have been guilty of cruelty; her bravery is fully acknowledged.

could admire her as a heroine, did we not think her memory as a woman stained with the blood of our countrymen and women. The old Baeza Bae of Gwalior is an instance of what a woman can effect in the councils of a state.

To an uneducated mind, travel will develop it; and especially in Hindoostan, a trip to the hills. Who can gaze on the Himalayas, on a dark stormy winter's day, and see that dark blue mass on the horizon, with its peaks, capped with snow, towering to the heavens, or view it in the bright tints of an evening's sun, of a beautiful rose colour, without encouraging his thoughts to wander and linger on the happy land beyond? Who has not felt the ecstatic feeling of youth, as he first inhales fresh mountain air in the Himalayas?

A vast amount of information may be collected by a careful observer in the hills. Bismillah felt such to be the case. She opened her eyes at the sound of a song, which ran thus:—

“Be it ours to embellish thy pillow,
With everything beauteous that grows in the deep;
Each flower of the rock and each gem of the billow,
Shall sweeten thy bed and illumine thy sleep.”

The gardener's wife at Bhimber placed a nosegay in her hands, made up of flowers which she had never seen before: how sweet, how fragrant!

“But what are their names?” cried the impatient Bismillah.

The gardener's wife carefully untied the string round the nosegay, and, classing the flowers, recounted their names and peculiar qualities:

"This is the Forget-me-not, given by young Ferin-
ghee ladies, I am told, to their lovers," said the gar-
dener's wife.

Bismillah bit her lip, and said—"Talk not to me of
our rulers; tell me about the flowers of a Timour!"

The gardener's wife held up an Iris, and said—"The
Emperor Akbar, of blessed memory, has said regarding
this flower, that 'it is banished to the grave-yard since
there was no spot to hold it in Cashmere!'"

"Enough!" said Bismillah—and her first lesson in
botany ended.

When the gardener's wife left the tent, Bismillah
burst into tears, and exclaimed passionately—"The Iris
is indeed emblematic of our race: we shall soon find no
safe resting-place but the tomb!"

Far, far in the distance, up amongst the clouds there,
the English love to dwell, at Darjeeling, Almorah,
Nynee Tal, Mussoorie, Landour, Kussowlie, Dugshai,
Simla, Kangra, Dharamsala, Murree, and Cashmere;
never did a Grecian on the burning sands of Egypt pant
more frantically for his cool Athens or Olympus than
does the English soldier for a cool hill-station in the
month of May. "Oh!" cries the sick soldier, in the
close hospital, "if I could but again hear the robin red-
breast, or black-bird, or thrush, or lark, sing amongst
the cool recesses of the hills, I should surely live!"

When will the Anglo-Indian race flourish like the
green palm, as colonists in the hills,—when will the
English child blush amongst the cool groves of the
Himalaya mountains? *—not the child of the rich man,

* English colonists of the lower orders will never succeed in

but the child of the colonist, of hardy frame, of iron sinew. Those will be happy days, when we miss the small rows of graves in the Indian churchyard.

A mind soon expands. Bismillah had fancied, when at Delhi, that there was no land beyond it; she had seen Lahore, an English army; and now for the world of Cashmere. Then her mind wandered to the land from which the Feringhee came, miles and miles away: Where was it? what was it like?—What would Cashmere, the far-famed valley, resemble?—what would its people be like?—Would one feel very cold so close to the snow?—what was snow like?—how wonderful! All these thoughts crowded on her, like clouds driven one against another, a strong wind urging them on.

All was ready for a start; all were dressed. The baggage was carried by coolies. Indad Ali rode a small, lean, narrow-chested pony, "very active in the hills," as the driver said. Zynoodcen was mounted on a mule, called Burakh. Bismillah and Zecnut Begum each sat in a small square doolee, or chair without legs, carried like a sedan chair, by four men. Four more men were allowed as a change, thus making a complement of eight men for each doolee; with a mate or chief man to see that all went right. He generally ran by the side of one of the doolees, with his right hand on it, to steady it. Kareeman was carried by four men. On past Bhimber, a place not worth stopping at, hot in the middle of the day, and not remarkable in any way.

the plains of India; in Cashmere some few might. Colonists of some capital and of special attainments will doubtless succeed in all parts of India, if steady in every respect.

The first water is passed, the Tovee, which the traveller has to pass time after time on his road to Cashmere. The first range of hills is gained, the Adhidâk; the breeze blows fresh amongst the fine pine trees—the sun is hot, notwithstanding the cover over the ladies' doolees, and the word is given—"Halt!"

CHAPTER XII.

"Oh! to see it at sunset, when, warm o'er the lake,
Its splendour at parting a summer eve throws."

THE valley of Cashmere, which has often served to fire a poet's fancy, and to afford such ample materials for the writer wandering through the imaginative regions of romance, is cut off from the outer world, as it were, by the lofty snow-capped range of the Peer Pinjal. This far-famed stupendous mountain range prevents a free communication between the province of Cashmere and the plains of the Punjab. It is the watch-dog which never sleeps of the jewel spread out in the broad and fertile plains of a secluded valley. It is not only on the south that nature has provided a strong protector for the valley of Cashmere; she is girt round on all sides by most lovely-shaped mountain ranges. When the valley of Cashmere is, in early spring, blushing with her rich treasure of apple, pear, and peach blossoms, her guardians are still clothed in a mantle of pure white

snow, which gradually clears away, forced to yield to the vigour of a July sun. In addition to the firm barrier of the Peer Pinjal range, whose highest peak reaches an altitude of 11,400 feet above the level of the sea, we have to encounter two other covering ranges—that of the Adhi-dāk, on which we halted Bismillah and her party, and also the Kamari-goshak, whose ascent is steep, and calls forth the vigour and resolution of the traveller fresh from the plains, and somewhat enervated with a residence in a hot climate. The special characteristic of the line of country to the Peer Pinjal range is a succession of valleys, cut off from each other, it is true, by subsidiary hills, but well marked as the highway to the great object of the traveller—the Vale of Cashmere. It is in these valleys that the imperial stages have been fixed; it was here that the emperors of Delhi ordered serais to be erected, for the accommodation of their courts, and for the general convenience of travellers—their ruins even now are of service; but the man who has any regard for his personal feelings must, like Bismillah and her party, provide himself with small handy hill-tents. This location of halting-grounds in the valleys, although convenient for large camps and their requisite supplies, is nevertheless inconvenient to the European traveller, since he is thus deprived of the fine air and prospect which halting on the higher ranges of hills would give him. To a Native, the sudden change to a cold climate is objectionable, and hence guarded against by the forethought of the emperors of Delhi. In days of yore, Cashmere was but imperfectly described or known, except by rumour. Bernier partly

lifted up the veil of obscurity ; after him Foster ; but it was reserved to our own countryman Vigne to so accurately describe Cashmere, as to render his popular work an agreeable and instructive companion when bending our steps to Cashmere. Immediately Bhimber is left behind, and indeed even at it, we become sensible of a change of climate ; and as we push on, the varied flowers of spring, flourishing shrubs, and other changes in the products of nature, remind us at every step that we are about to tread new paths, of fresh and attractive novelty. Prior to the first inroad of the conqueror bearing in one hand the Koran, in the other the sword, some 700 years ago, Cashmere was happy and prosperous under its Hindoo rulers ; and prior again to their existence, as at present socially and religiously constituted, other kings ruled : the Buddhist temples, used by them, still adorn the valley—of ponderous size, and not devoid of architectural beauty. We are thus carried back into the ages of darkness, superstition, and doubt ; but a legacy, in the shape of a mythology of undoubted antiquity, still serves to enslave the Hindoo mind of the present day. Whilst the Mahomedan pilgrim from the north, from Yarkund, Kokan, Balkh, Bokhara, and Cabool, toils over rough and inhospitable regions to visit his favourite patron saint, Hamdan, men from the south are equally anxious to crown the Peer Pinjal in search of peace of mind in holy offices rendered to some good saints whose shrines are to be found scattered over the most lovely spots in the valley. Again, the Hindoo pilgrim, with his sable skin and fine organisation, must search for pardon as a penitent at the Cave of Amarnath :

passing through drifts of snow almost naked, he trusts to wash away sins committed in the heat of the plains by the side of the crystal glacier. Legends of ages long since gone by are kept alive by the assiduity of the guardian priests.

Since the year 1846, when Maharajah Goolab Singh came into possession of the valley of Cashmere, in consequence of a treaty with the British Government, which represented the receipt by it of seventy-five lakhs of rupees, the valley has been a favourite resort of British officers; to it they now flock from the dull, dusty, hot stations in the plains—from Lahore, Sealkote, Rawul Pindee, Peshawur, and other more distant parts, such as Agra, Allahabad, and Mooltan. In 1859, two hundred British officers probably visited Cashmere. The interests of the British Government are partially represented by a British officer, who is deputed to Cashmere for six months to settle all disputes which may arise between British subjects and the court of the Maharajah of Jumoo.

Certain routes from the plains to Cashmere are available for British officers, and on them they experience every attention and civility from the officials of His Highness Maharajah Runbeer Singh. The authorised routes are those from Bhimber, from Abbotabad, from Murree, and from Thanah *vid* Baramullah.

The route *vid* Bhimber, passing over the high pass of the Peer Pinjal, will occupy ten days; but if the season be early, and the snow deep on the Peer Pinjal,—it is generally clear by the 10th May,—then the route will occupy four or five days more, the circuitous road of

Thanah being resorted to. The Peer Pinjal will thus remain on the right hand, and the lower portion of it being passed, the station of Vri will find the traveller on the high-road which leads to Muzufferabad. The direct route to Rawul Pindie and Peshawur *vid* Abbotabad, and the road to Murree, a hill station at which the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab resides during the hot season, will be from Vri. Travellers from Thanah, Abbotabad, and Murree, meeting at Vri, will proceed together to Baramullah, *vid* Noshera, through a lovely hill country, and a small pass must be crowned, when Baramullah will lie at our feet, a town on the river Jhelum. We thus gain the western limit of the vale of Cashmere. The Jhelum rushes with frantic violence at the traveller's feet, *vid* Vri, and thus on to the arid plains of the Punjab, to gain the Indus, and meet the ocean at Kurrachee.

The prohibited routes, used only by the Maharajah of Jumoo and his family, are those which, coming from Jumoo and Aknoor, join the main road at Thanah, then over the Peer; but there is a more direct route from Jumoo *vid* Banihul; it is rough, and difficult. The direct road from Sealkote is *vid* Jumoo, the capital of His Highness' territory. The most easy route into Cashmere is that *vid* Abbotabad; it is open all the year round.

A decided change in the temperature will first be experienced at Thanah; we here for the first time quite realise its being similar to that of the north of Italy. It is at the station of Thanah that we first observe fine, tapering, tall poplar trees.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM the top of the Adhi-dāk, our party proceeded into the valley below, in which the imperial serai was situated. It has now been somewhat modernised. Tents were pitched on the fine green velvet turf inside the serai, and all were soon comfortably provided for. The day had been one of the most instructive to Bismillah; the scenery was quite new to her, and the fine perfumed air, wafted along so quietly and placidly, almost intoxicated her. She was much amused by the cries of her bearers, —the man in front always cautioning his fellows, who support the doolee from behind, to secure their footing, or keep step.

"There's a star—go along!" "Her treasury's full—go along!" "Mind the stone—go along!" "The Subah of Delhi,—that of Mooltan!" "Here's a sweet lady,—fresh from the plains!"

It is quite wonderful the fatigue these bearers are capable of going through; and the manner in which they manage to pass over the roughest ground safely excites the wonder of every one fresh from the plains of India.

The next day's halting-ground was in the cool garden of Noshera, outside the town, and well shaded with mulberry trees. This place originally belonged to Jow-

ahcer Singh, first cousin of the present Maharajah of Jumoo, a son of the Prime Minister Dhyān Sing, who met his end so suddenly the day that Maharajah Shere Singh also fell a victim to the most cowardly treachery. Owing to political troubles, Jowaheer Singh* now lives at Umballah, a pension being paid to him from the Jumoo treasury.

Before, however, reaching Noshera, the Kamari-goshak must be passed, a range of considerable height, of steep ascent and descent. It is from the top of this range, where the road passes over the brow of the mountain, close to a solitary old fakeer's hut, that we obtain the first fine view of the snow-clad Peer Pinjal,—a sight not to be forgotten for years.

After Noshera, the serai of Changas was our party's halting-place. From it also the view of the Peer Pinjal is very striking and lovely. The serai is built on the brow of a hill, and the Tovee flows at our feet—now a fairly large and rapid stream.

Indad Ali was a fisherman; so, leaving Zynooden to pore over his Koran, he went down to the river, and sitting down on a rock, he soon had the pleasure of capturing a basketful of large Himalaya trout. A robin sang sweetly in a bush close by, and the setting sun soon coloured the landscape with a soft, mellow, pale, yellow tint. In the distance, the Peer Pinjal shone like a mass of crystal; but close to the river the dark green of the cedar trees refused to put on a mantle of yellow: they threw their deep shadows into the clear waters of the stream below. Thus the sun went down, and Indad Ali

* Since dead.

was soon left in darkness, with his basket of fish. Bismillah had never seen such beautiful fish, although those in her own home were much admired.

Indad Ali was much praised for his skill by Zeenut Begum; and the party was soon asleep, as early hours were the order of the day.

There are no thieves in the hills: travellers may pass along without any fear of plunderers; on this point the Rajah of Jumoo's arrangements are to be commended. Our police in India generally is bad; our attempt to remedy the defects of our system by the introduction of military police will not succeed—for this reason: military police are expensive, and very efficient as guards: but when they are employed on miscellaneous duties, they lose their discipline, become corrupt, and disaffected. The heavy arms and accoutrements of a military policeman unfit him for rapid moving about, and if he is to leave them behind him when on duty, why pay him for *not* carrying them. Military police are to a certain extent good as preventives, when a fixed military guard is required; and they are very useful to move about to check any popular outbreak, as long as they are not themselves interested in the question which has brought about a feeling of excitement. From their drill, dress, and accoutrements, military police do not make good patrols on dark nights, through a rough country. Their being generally strangers to the part of the country where they are located, also deprives the Government of the information likely to be useful from a local knowledge, and a personal acquaintance with the people of a country. There is also nothing in the first instance to warrant a belief that Native officers will make good police

officers; indeed, the attempt to learn their duties often leads them into scrapes, and in the end obliges them to leave the service. Let military police be restricted to preventive duties, and let a detective police be organised, not with reference to one district or division, but with reference to a presidency, under the management of really efficient military or civil officers. All have not the powers of perception, or talents, which would make them good detectives; but men are doubtless to be found, if sought for. Let men be chosen for some choice qualities as detectives, and then carefully watched. It is possible to organise a good police, but the elements of it are not to be found in a purely military organisation. The non-commissioned officer does not like the doubt, peril, and uncertainty which attaches itself to police duties: as a military man, he can be certain of his service being permanent; not so when brought into contact with the worst characters of the country. A military man generally learns to be straightforward, truthful, and open-hearted; those qualities are soon eradicated in the corrupt atmosphere of police investigations.

The next day's march was to Rajore, a town situated on the Tovee. There is a fine garden at this place, on the banks of the river, shady and cool, together with a ruined palace, the property of Mahomedans in former days, whose chiefs were of some consideration. Their descendants are now pensioners of the British Government, and reside in our territory. There are some very fine chenar trees in this garden, well worth attention and admiration. Indad Ali was unable to fish in the stream at Rajore—it was too impetuous.

The next day's trip was to Thanah, where our party halted in a cozy garden of plum trees, encircled by a bubbling stream. It was now cold enough to allow of a camp fire being lit at night, and of Zeenut Begum and Bismillah making some additions to their dress, in the shape of warm clothing. It was at this place that Imamoodeen, the Governor of Cashmere, resigned the Government of it to Sir Henry Lawrence, on the country being assigned to Maharajah Goolab Singh. Bismillah suffered at Thanah from such a severe cold, that it was after some consultation thought better to take the circuit *via* Poonch and Vri, instead of at once ascending the Peer by the more direct route.

Next day the road was over the Rattan Peer, a cold dark mountain, in many places covered with magnificent cedars in thick forests. Now and then a piece of snow attracted attention, amongst the depths of the ravines. The serais of Poonch and Kahota were reached on their respective days of marching, and our travellers found themselves ready to pass the snow of the lower range of the Peer next day, from the serai of Kahota. The road which passed over the Peer could be traced at certain points. The clouds which covered the top of the Peer made the trip one of probable discomfort; however, since Bismillah was quite well again, all felt impatient for the ascent on the following morning,—even Borakh pricked up his ears; but he had sadly fallen off in condition. As to Indad Ali's pony, he could hardly be said to be mortal, he was so thin,—pluck to the back bone, in the most literal sense.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ We stand above the jarring world,
Alike beyond its hope, its dread,
In gloomy safety, like the dead !”

BISMILLAH slept uneasily and fitfully. She dreamt that she stood before the fountain in her Delhi house, and was watching the glittering drops on the broad leaves of the lotus as they lay placidly on the surface of the water;—suddenly, she was caught up in a dust-storm, and carried through the air, burning with heat;—at once she felt a chill, and stood alone on the summit of a towering mountain covered with snow, at the brink of a yawning precipice—she could not move or scream : banks of clouds passed by and over her head ; she was involved in mist ; thunder shook the ground, the attendant of the flashing lightning ;—the storm cleared away : an old man stood by her side, of venerable aspect ; he laid his hand gently on Bismillah’s, and said, “ Fear not ! I am the Spirit of the departed Emperor Jehangeer : I cannot rest in the tomb at Shadera [near Lahore] : my heart is in the green fields of Cashmere ; I wish to be buried amongst the people and in the land I loved so well, where I wandered about, so happy, with my beloved Noor Jehan ! Years and years ago I died, stricken with paralysis, at Baramgulla ; time after time I have toiled up the Peer Pinjal, hoping only to catch a glance at the valley beneath,—an evil spirit always forces me back. Princess of the royal house of Timour !—Bismillah ! thine be the duty to free me from the toils of

this demon!" A thunder-clap seemed to shake the ground: Bismillah opened her eyes, and saw the mule Borakh's head inside her tent, braying awfully; he was in quest of a place to shelter him from the drizzling rain without. A blown given by Zynooddeen soon brought Borakh to his proper senses. The camp was soon in a bustle, and a cup of tea prepared for the ladies, the water having been boiled at a roaring fire of pine wood. Zeenut Begum and Bismillah were almost frozen. Bismillah held up her hand to protect her face from the glare of the fire: how beautiful was that hand!—a sign of her noble birth. When the face has lost its beauty, the eye its brilliancy—the hand still survives the wreck of time. The doolies were ready; the men had provided themselves with grass shoes, to prevent their slipping. The ladies were now warmly clad, and off set the cavalcade. The drizzling rain soon turned into snow—how cold it was! Another vigorous pull, and the top of the pass is gained. The thunder rolled amongst the clouds; there was a break, and the bright plains of the Punjab were seen, far far distant, thousands of feet below. Bismillah remembered her dream. An old fakcer appeared, and presented a snow-drop to Zeenut and Bismillah, saluted them both, and said—"Welcome to the royal house of Timour—the spell will now be broken!" A vivid flash of lightning rent the sky, and the fakcer retreated to his hut. All struggled to get on: the footing was uncertain and slippery: woe to the man who remained behind. Borakh stumbled, and fell, rolling down a height of thirty feet; he was soon secured by two strong guides who always accompany a party from the serai of Hyderabad. Indad Ali and Zynooddeen were

now forced to walk—a thing a Native only does at the last moment. The jungle-fowl screamed as they flew down the side of the hill, having been disturbed in their morning's repast on the top of the mountain. Peal after peal of thunder warned the traveller that there was no time to be lost. Each one, as he came up, gave the fakeer a small thank-offering. Down the other side of the mountain went our travellers, amongst the perpetually dark masses of pine forest, as fast as they could. On—on !—woe to the lingerer ! The air became warmer ! the sun shone out brightly, the serai of Allahabad was reached. The tents were soon pitched, and a young Cashmeree girl of extreme beauty presented Bismillah with a wreath of apple blossoms—the orchards were in full bloom. As Bismillah contrasted the dark and towering mountain behind her with the orchards glowing with blossoms, spread out on a carpet of velvet-green, she sighed—she thought of Jehangeer in his hot gloomy tomb at Shadera !

CHAPTER XV.

“THE late rebellion has, we think, made us regard the Natives of India in a false light ; we now consider them worse as to character than they really are ; a great cry has been raised against caste, unjustly and unwisely. The army, the cause of the late rebellion, collected as it is from various villages in our provinces, must not be looked on as a true specimen of the Natives of India

generally. Our army is generally recruited from the village communities, leaving a vast population living in towns totally unrepresented by the military element. Now villagers themselves, if they are closely questioned, will often allow, that Native soldiers are somewhat of a turbulent character ; the reason for a soldier's enlisting is often to be traced to his not being willing to comply with the rules in force in a society of which he is a member ; according to precedent, he must either yield or quit his village. Numbers of men quit their homes, and seldom if ever visit them again. The Native soldiery of India becomes a distinct element. Amongst those classes who seldom if ever serve in the army, it will be found that a great deal of honorable feeling exists ; in fact, the monied transactions of the country, and its trade generally, are carried on by men who seldom appeal to our courts, either civil or military. The upper classes of society—those who subsist on jageers and hereditary pensions,—generally become effeminate, corrupt, and dissolute ; but the middling classes, especially the Hindoos, are strongly bound together by the rules of caste, and restrained from committing excesses incidental to the position of those whose rank or wealth places them, as it were, above the power or influence of class censure. Many Natives were devotedly attached to our countrymen individually during the recent outbreak : it is not the character of a Native to care much for a Government, but he attaches himself most firmly to individuals. When we were for a time unable to stem the torrent of military revolt, we, as foreigners, paid the penalty attaching itself to the employment of a mercenary force, without the power of

curbing it. Asiatics are proverbially treacherous; still we met with many instances of individual fidelity during the late war,—as much as we could under all the circumstances of the case. Caste binds society together and acts as a curb upon masses of people whom our laws could never touch; it prevents the spread of many social vices. The prejudice against high-caste men is also not a sound principle to go on: they hold a high position in India amongst their Native brethren; if they serve us faithfully, we benefit by their offices, which are likely to be more beneficial from the estimation they are held in. The taste for low-caste men is a mistake: they never command respect beyond the mere exercise of official functions; and we doubt their being an iota more faithful than high-caste men. Indeed, the reverse of the position is really the case. We English have our class prejudices; and what can exceed the fury of an English mob uncontrolled by the law? No man should be thought the worse of by Government either on account of his religion or caste; all should have a fair chance of official advancement and employment. The change in the military service will, we fear, be to the injury of that hold which we have in India, through our European officers directly. Under the old system, every European officer had his retainers, who, from their liberal pay, were able to support a number of relations, who thus naturally looked forward to our Government as the source of their prosperity. Thus, when a young man came out to India, he was generally able to secure faithful attendants. The mere occupation of India by a European force is not all that is required: we must carry the people of the country along with us. If they

all pull against us, our task of government becomes most irksome; but there appears to be no good reason why we should not be able to make every man in his hut, however humble, feel that his interests are not neglected in those great questions which agitate the State. As a rule, the masses of Indian society should never be stirred up by questions which affect each man personally and disagreeably; to which he has an instinctive aversion, either from their novelty or strangeness. A Native of India is the most difficult man to argue with on the face of the globe. The income tax is objectionable in as far as it stirs up the masses of society; it is undoubtedly a vast, broad, and comprehensive measure: but it has the drawback of forcing the millions of India to think and talk about it at the same moment, with anything but pleasure." Indad Ali read these remarks as he sat on a carpet at the halting-ground of Allahabad; he had extracted them from an English paper at the instance of a friendly Baboo, and translated them into Oordoo. Zynooden listened with much attention, and replied—"The English element of Government as yet only floats on the surface of society; the rule of the Feringhee is only known to the villager by name; but the income tax will bring it home to every man's door."

Indad Ali replied calmly, "We are all bound to support a liberal, firm, and just Government."

CHAPTER XVI.

WE are told that Demosthenes, when he went into the presence of Philip of Macedon with his elaborate speech all cut and dry, broke down, and could not utter a word. So it was with Poppy when called upon by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab to account for Popkins' appointment to Peshawur as Commissioner. He stammered, and could say nothing. He was recommended to take leave to the hills for a few months, it being evident that he was suffering from a soft brain. He selected Cashmere for a summer residence, and to Cashmere he went. Now Popkins was not immediately required at Peshawur: he, however, at the instigation of his wife, Mrs. Popkins, joined his appointment for a day, to satisfy that cormorant the Civil Auditor, and draw his pay. Poppy was anxious to persuade him that the trip to Peshawur would injure his health. Popkins replied with vigour—"A C.B. fears nothing!" Eventually, Mr. and Mrs. Popkins, and Mr. and Mrs. Poppy, all met at Cashmere.

And who was Mrs. Poppy? Her maiden name was Stubbs. Mary Stubbs was as well known in the Parish of Honiton as the church steeple. She was the only daughter of Mr. John Stubbs, who kept a shop, and had a flourishing and increasing business as a plumber and glazier. Now Poppy's father also lived in the same parish, and it was there that the machinery of his paper-mill was heard rumbling from morning till night.

Poppy had long known Mary Stubbs—indeed, since she was quite a little girl. They used to go birds'-nesting

together, mushroom-hunting, tadpole-fishing, snowdrop-picking. As Poppy grew up, he came to be a scholar, and at last a competitioner. There was one good point about Poppy—he was constant to Mary Stubbs; but then her father was well off, and promised his daughter £5,000 on the day of her marriage—and he kept his word. Poppy had an idea, when he put on a tail coat, indulged in stand-ups or cut-throats, *alias* collars, and had read the classics, that keeping a shop was not genteel; but then his own father kept a paper-mill,—it was paper *versus* glass, lead, and £5,000 with Mary Stubbs. It was soon known in the village that Master Poppy would marry Miss Stubbs. Poppy used to go into the shop as if to buy lead and glass, but he generally slipped into the back parlour, and had tea with Mary Stubbs, who always had the *Times* ready for dear Green. Poppy objected to the perfumes at Stubbs'—putty was the chief essence; the smell of soldering also offended Poppy's classical nose, which was, however, a turn-up;—in short, he mildly hinted it to Mary Stubbs. She laughed, and said, “Why, Green, it is to my mind far better than the acid smell which clings to your clothes from your paper-mill.

Mary Stubbs soon diluted and absorbed all smells with the strong odour of musk. It was her favourite perfume, when she scented her pocket-handkerchief for church.

If Bismillah could not read much, Mary Stubbs was, on her part, deficient in the manner in which she pronounced the English language: she left out the letter *h* on all occasions when it should have been used, and inserted it when it should have been omitted. She was

not very well acquainted with the usages of good society, either when eating or drinking,—she put the end of her knife into her mouth, and collected her peas on its point. When she was asked to take wine, she used to refuse, on the plea that she had already had quite enough. Popkins' father invited the newly-married couple to dinner, out of respect to the Bengal Civil Service, of which Poppy had, by his own merits, now become a member. Popkins senior, however, after his guests were gone, sighed, and said—"Ability certainly is very commendable, but manners should not be entirely lost sight of."

Mr. and Mrs. Poppy, and Mr. and Mrs. Popkins, were now in Cashmere. They took a comfortable house on the banks of the river Jhelum, since Mrs. Popkins urged on her husband the propriety of keeping on good terms with Poppy. "He is a man of ability," said Mrs. Popkins, "and will rise in the service: why quarrel with him?" Popkins was not a man to object to any proposition made by his wife; so he put up with Mrs. Poppy's red hair, her *h's* in and out of season, and her musk scent, to which she clung most tenaciously—it reminded her, she said of "home;" to Poppy it brought back the now distasteful recollection of the putty and the shop; but then he looked at Mary, and thought of her £5,000 in Indian bonds at 4 per cent., secured to him by a marriage settlement. When taxes on incomes and trades were talked of, Poppy always winced. After all, which was the most genteel, paper or glass? We make most fanciful distinctions—we English—as to relative gentility; as long as a man has been educated like a gentleman, and behaves like one,

what does it signify? After all, however, we rather hang fire when we are introduced to the relations of a *novus homo*, whether in the tallow, grocery, biscuit, or beef and mutton line: how old Ram Sing, the Brahmin chuprassee, would be grieved if he knew that the Secretary Saheb Bahadoor Huzoor Khodawand Niamat Ali Shan belonged to the beef and mutton trade;—how he would have to tell white lies to support the falling pillars of the State! The royals in India are all that they should be as to pedigree, but who can make up a coat of arms and a crest for the owner of the paper-mill married to a glazier's daughter? It must be a sheet of foolscap paper, with a window in the centre for a coat of arms, and a poppy for the crest.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MARCH to Vri, and the one on to Noshera, brings the traveller to within one march of Baramullah, a town in the valley of Cashmere, on its western extremity, pleasantly located on the banks of the river Jhelum. We meet this river first at Vri: proceeding *via* Thanah, it passes between two ranges of mountains; its course is very rapid and impetuous. The road from Vri to Baramullah will be along the left bank of the river as the traveller passes into Cashmere by the Thanah route. The scenery is very lovely—perhaps the most attractive since Bhimber has been left behind. It is on the way from Vri to Noshera that we first meet with

the remains of Buddhist temples; but as we shall hereafter describe the most celebrated temple in the valley, we shall now pass them by in silence. It is at Noshera that we become aware of our near approach to the valley, and our suspicions become a reality when we crown a small pass, and look down on the valley beneath. The first impression of the valley is not perhaps as striking as it would be had we not, since leaving Vri, passed through such enchanting scenery. A cedar on the road is of itself a noble sight, and there are magnificent forests of them, upon which the axe of civilisation is making sad inroads. The cedar of the hills will soon be prostrate in the plains, for the use of the Punjab railway at Baramullah.

Indad Ali received news from Sircenuggur, a large town, the capital of Cashmere, that a nice house had been hired on the banks of the river Jhelum for the accommodation of our travellers, through the kind offices of a Native shawl merchant, who had extensive dealings with the marts of Bombay, Umritsur, Lahore, London, Paris, Persia, and Constantinople. A boat had also been hired, with good strong boatmen, twelve in number, who were to receive as wages two rupees eight annas each per mensem. Most of the traffic in the valley of Cashmere is carried on by boats: there are thousands of them; a numerous population live and die in them—in fact, never leave them except when forced to do so by disease or death. These boats are propelled by lozenge-shaped paddles, about four and a half feet long, and the rowers sit fore and aft, leaving the centre of the boat available for travellers and their baggage. These boats are protected by mat roofs made of reeds,

and their sides are made snug by purdahs of the same material, which can be drawn up or let down at pleasure. The description of boat now used by our travellers is called a dhinga; but, for pleasuring about Sireenuggur, a lighter boat is in fashion, called a shikari. Persons of high rank are allowed a perindah or winged boat, which is propelled by thirty men. The Maharaja has boats for state occasions with suites of rooms, which are gaily colored. Our party were soon seated, the baggage was stowed away, and off the boat started from the poplar enclosure around whose stems vines had twined themselves to a gigantic height of thirty or forty feet. Cashmere people are great gossips, and all were anxious to know who made up the party. It was soon known that it was composed of people of distinction. After a row of twenty minutes, all became sensible of the extreme beauty of the valley into which they were moving on so smoothly over a fine tranquil piece of water. The amphitheatre of hills of gigantic proportions towered above the valley, covered with snow, and reminded the traveller that he was now indeed shut out from the outer world. The shades of evening came on; the sun went down behind a bank of golden clouds, set off with light green, purple, and countless varying tints. The hills were reflected, without the loss of a colour, in the clear waters of the river. The halting-place for the night was reached—Sopar, a small town on the banks of the river, with a small guardian fort.

Bismillah felt the chill air of the evening, and wrapped her mantle around her; Zeenut did so also. Both thought of the burning plains of India, the dust-storms, the arid brown fields, from which the golden corn had

now been reaped, and mentally contrasted the valley of Cashmere with Hindoostan.

Bismillah saw before her fields on which the wheat had only just reared its blade above the ground, the vine leaf still retained all its freshness and brightness, the gift of spring: the blossom of the orchards was now almost at an end, excepting a tree here and there.

The next day would bring our travellers to Sireenuggur.

Thus the land of promise had been reached for which poets had sighed for years, and died leaving their ideas to posterity as to what Cashmere probably is or ought to be. It was now dark, but the moon rose with modest splendour, and threw a silvery tint over the scene.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE next day it poured with rain, so that our travellers were unable to see anything more than the green fields and trees bordering on the river; the mountains were shrouded in vast masses of clouds; amongst which the peals of thunder were loud and frequent; the river rose rapidly, and threatened to overflow its banks; the passage of the boat against the stream was slow and tedious, the boatmen being often forced to drag it along by means of a rope. The distance from Sireenuggur to Sopur is fourteen cos by land; from Sopur to Bar-ramulla four cos. It must be borne in mind that there

are no periodical rains in Cashmere; rain falls much the same as it does in England, but not so frequently. It thus was late when the first bridge over the Jhelum was reached, and quite dark when the house hired for the party at Sireenuggur was attained. The houses on either bank of the river, many of them large, three and four stories high, stood out boldly on the banks of the river; they looked gloomy and sombre.

The house hired for Zeenut Begum was reached by a flight of steps from the bank of the river; it stood close to the venerable shrine of Shah Hamdan—only separated by a narrow street from its churchyard, which, contrary to local usage, was placed in the heart of the city. The house was two-storied, mostly built of wood, as is the case with Cashmere houses generally; the entrance was by a door which opened into the street on the right hand side. The lower story was, as is usual with houses in the East, conveniently built, with a courtyard into which the rooms opened, mostly used for the accommodation of servants, and as kitchens. When entering the lower story, on the right hand side, there was a staircase leading to the upper apartments, which are used for sitting and sleeping in. On the landing place there was a small room, set apart for attendants, who sit outside the purdah; a latticed window looked out on the river from it. There is no glass in Cashmere, therefore paper and lattice wood, of very pretty designs, supply its place. When the purdah was raised which guarded the privacy of the inner apartments, the visitor found himself in a comfortable suite of three rooms—a centre and two side-rooms; the side-rooms screened off by latticework, and

an arched doorway. There were three windows to the centre room, and one to each of the side-rooms. The windows were so arranged, that with the assistance of balconies, a front view of the river was obtained; also one up and down the stream. A person could thus be behind the purdah, and see all that was passing in the outer river world. The floors of the rooms were furnished partly with carpets,—they are made particularly well at Sircenuggur; the colours bright, the wool soft, the patterns elegant,—partly with patchwork carpets, made of pattoo—the colours were remarkably light, the patterns very choice; these carpets are made at Islamabad in great perfection. A small table or two, made of walnut wood, without polish—a few cups of porcelain from China, of transparent quality, for the favourite beverage of tea—a chowrie of fine cow-tail hair—a few vases of jasper from Yarkund to hold flowers (amongst these the yellow rose of Cashmere was conspicuous—alas! not sweet-smelling,) completed the fittings. A brazier with charcoal added warmth to the rooms, which felt somewhat damp after the day's rain.

All were comfortably housed, when Indad Ali was required to attend to the kotwal of the city, who had come to spy out the land, as sharp as a German hotel-keeper, with his big book. At first the kotwal, Mala Buksh, was inclined to be very troublesome: he asked Indad Ali in a very boisterous manner where he had come from, and where his passport was. Indad Ali replied sweetly—"I have come from Vri, where I had the pleasure of meeting your brother, Jan Buksh, formerly a jemedar in the 68th Native Infantry—a great friend of the rebel general Buksh Khan!"

"Say no more about it," said Mala Buksh, "but in future consider me your friend. Run! run! Khodadad Khan, and bring a *dali* [offering of fruits, &c.] for my dear brother!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE day following that on which our travellers arrived at Sireenuggur was Friday, the Mahomedan Sabbath. It is observed at Sireenuggur, and indeed through the valley generally, as a day of total rest; none work except those who are forced to do so. On this day, the shawl shops are closed, the looms are silent; and thousands pour out into the streets, to attend the services at the various mosques and shrines which abound in the city.

Zynooddeen was up very early, having made up his mind for a day of devotion. He first visited the Jumma Musjid, a large building, partly built of stone, partly of wood, the gift to the town of a former Emperor of Delhi. The square was filled with thousands of the faithful, who listened with great attention to the sermons delivered at stated periods of the day to ever-changing audiences: men came and went as they thought fit. The forms of worship are rather those of Arabia than of Hindoostan, which has departed from the orthodox form of prayer in a great measure. As the clear chant of the assembled throng resounded along the corridors, and was carried through the still air, Zynooddeen sighed: he remembered the time when

a scene like this would have sent forth thousands to battle for the faith. What can be more exciting than a community of religious feeling breathing forth aggression, increased in intensity by the presence of a pure air, a bright blue sky, and an amphitheatre of snow-clad mountains of surpassing beauty? Zynooddeen felt, however, that the sceptre had departed. He roamed from one mosque to another, and it was evening before he again entered his mistress' house.

And how had Bismillah been employed? She had read her Koran a little, and looked out of the window a good deal. The sight on the river was novel: pleasure-party after pleasure-party passed up and down; as many as thirty and forty people might be seen in one boat. The amount of tea (imported *via* Ladak) which was consumed was something enormous: cupful after cupful, thickened with ghee and rose-water, regaled the thousands who really rested from work on the Mahomedan Sunday. Shawl-making is very trying to the eyes, consequently a row on the river or the lake is a real treat.

Bismillah had hired a servant—a Cashmeree girl, a native of the valley, and of the village of Chodra, on the banks of the lake. She had lived with her parents at Loodiana, and had been brought up at the American Mission School, but had now returned to her native place. Noor Jehan the empress was, it is said, born at Chodra; and Deoti, Bismillah's servant, claimed a distant relationship to her. Deoti could read, write, keep accounts, and sew; and was very neat and clean in her person. She brought with her very few worldly goods—the Cashmere people are miserably poor,—but had

carefully protected two small books, which she carried in her hand; they were neatly covered.

"Deoti," said Bismillah, "when will this travelling on the river in boats stop?"

"Princess," said Deoti, "'tis hard to say: when a Cashmeree gets into a boat, he is always reluctant to quit it; some save their money, and then enter a boat to spend their last pice!"

"Whence this love of boats?" said Bismillah.

"Princess," said Deoti, "I know not; it is a passion, a strong enchantment; but from whence, who can tell?"

"Deoti," said Bismillah, "you are a good Mahomedan, are you not?"

At these words Deoti started; she soon, however, recovered herself, and said—"No!"

Bismillah looked full at Deoti, and asked, with astonished eye—"You do not belong to the Feringhees' faith, do you?"

Before Deoti could reply to the question, Zeenut Begum touched Bismillah on the shoulder, and said—"What a capital servant you have engaged!—she has made the house look quite smart and gay."

Bismillah darted a quick glance at Deoti, but said no more to her on this occasion.

Zynooddeen was in great glee at the strict Moslem manner in which he had passed the day. As to Indad Ali, he had said his prayers at the shrine of Shah Hamdan, and had had a long chat with Deoti. He soon ascertained her secret, and another also.

"Who do you think is arrived here?" said he to Zynooddeen.

"Who?" said Zynooddeen.

"A member of the family of Timour!" replied Indad Ali.

"Ah!—who?" asked Zynooddeen.

"Captain Charles Orlando DeLaré, Deputy Commissioner of Shahpoor—of the race of the Pearl!"

"And therefore a cousin of our mistress," added Zynooddeen, as he repeated a verse from the Koran.

CHAPTER XX.

Who can resist the cackling of the half-wild geese, of the thousands of ducks in the Apple Canal, the property of the Maharaja, food for British officers? Who can slumber when the clarions of thousands of vigorous cocks in the city of Sireenuggur, and the clear bugles from the palace of the Maharaja, announce the birth of the early dawn? Deoti could not; she was always an early riser. When she stood in the centre of the room with a duster in her hand, calmly surveying the work she had completed, and that which still remained unfinished, she must have struck any one. Her hair was coal black; it was drawn well back, and plaited into a long pigtail, which, again, was twisted with black worsted, forming a network which tapered down far below her waist. She wore a small red cap on her head, and the native Cashmere dress, which consists of nothing but a white cotton dressing-gown, made long, with wide sleeves. At times, Deoti wore a band round her waist, but not always. Her feet were bare: no

Natives in India wear shoes inside a house; and this custom is followed by the people of Cashmere. On her toes—that is, on one of each foot—she wore a silver ring, and two silver rings on each hand, in one of which there was a small, tiny piece of looking-glass, at which Deoti performed her toilette. She was of the same age as Bismillah, but much stouter; her complexion almost as fair as that of a European. Her features were perfect. She had quite a Madonna contour of countenance, such as that seen in the picture of the Holy Family. There was this difference in the temperaments of Bismillah and Deoti: the former was made to command, the latter to obey. The people of Cashmere, from years of oppression and the degrading influences of a despotic sway, have become timid, crouching, and false in all those social qualities which bind man to man. You may believe the pledged word of a Pathan, but never that of a Cashmeree. From having originally been brave, the Cashmeree is now celebrated for his pusillanimity. The Cashmeree is indolent: when in the possession of money he soon spends it. He has a good deal of the Italian about him; is mentally acute, and fond of satire, jokes, and repartee.

Deoti was not happy until her mistress purchased a Cashmere teapot, shaped like a Tuscan Vase, with an iron heater inside, like our urns in England. They are made of copper, tinned over. It was a pretty sight—Zeenut and Bismillah at breakfast: they sat on the ground, with a clean white cloth spread before them. Deoti, sitting on the opposite side, poured out the tea into choice porcelain cups, imported from China *via* Yarkund. Fruit was placed in trays made of papier

maché, of fine colour and design. As to food, it consisted of rice, milk, butter, curry, and a few chuppteates. The population of Cashmere live on rice—it is the great staple of the valley: it is inferior to that of Rangra, Hoshiarpoor, and the fine-grained rice of Patna. Wheat grows in the valley, but appears to be injured by the want of store-houses, and the small attention devoted to its cultivation. The flour of Ladak is, however, good. On the table were nosegays in fine jasper vases.

Deoti pointed out the wild scented rose, the buttercup, clover, jasmine, primrose, hawthorn, lilies, forget-me-nots, fox-gloves,—in short, all those flowers which we English love—associates of our childhood. The lotus, pink, of a fragrant scent, with its broad copper-tinted leaves, was the belle of the nosegay.

As to dried fruits, there were apricots, almonds, walnuts, raisins; but the cherry was the only fruit of the season which was ripe. Deoti promised white-hearts and black cherries in abundance; after them, apricots, of fine flavour, growing on magnificent trees; later in the season plums, greengages; then melons, apples, pears, peaches, quinces, grapes, and walnuts. “Strawberries are found wild,” said Deoti.

Bismillah was delighted at the prospect of fruit held out to her. “And what about the climate, Deoti?”

“It will be,” replied Deoti, “cold until the middle of June: you will be glad to have the brazier in full play both in the morning and the evening; during the day, the sun will be agreeably hot. In July and August it will be warm; not anything like your Delhi heat, but still hot for a Cashmeree. In September, the sun will gradually lose its power; the mornings and the evenings

will be cold and bracing; snow will again appear on the hills. It will fall in the valley in December; the lake will be frozen, sometimes the river: it was so in Maharaja Shere Sing's time. You must be careful of cold and chills; fever is not prevalent in the valley;—in fact, you will always have good health with a little care."

When we state that a European labourer could work all the year round in the fields of Cashmere without any injury to his health, excepting in perhaps a very few hot days in the middle of July or August, our English readers will understand the climate perfectly. In Switzerland we have found the climate quite as warm as it is in the valley of Cashmere, even on its hottest days.

When we leave Bhimber, and travel towards Cashmere, we shall at once realise the very great capabilities of a country in which the native of India and the people of Europe could both find suitable homes, and pursue the bents of their respective temperaments. The manufacturer will find plenty of water for his mill, and wool to work in; the agriculturist will find fine broad meadows in a sublime climate; the grazier may wander with his flocks and herds over miles and miles of the fairest mountain pasturage; the breeder of horses may soon ride about on animals which will fetch their £100 and £150 in the Indian market.

Bismillah was a great contrast to her sister Zeenut; the latter was quiet and retiring. Her misfortunes often depressed her; she thought of Delhi as it was, and contrasted it with what it now is. She called to mind her dead husband, and the thousands of Delhi people outcasts and ruined; she often wished to ask after the fate of Bahader Shah, the ex-King.

Zeenut one day mentioned her thoughts to Bismillah, who at once fired up, and with a flashing eye said—“Would that I had a horse, a sword, and thirty thousand English troops—Feringhees though they be! I'd be Queen of India—Queen of Ispahan! I'd have Istamboul! My sword should be red with the blood of thousands! None of your gay horse-trappings for me. I'd pass the Khyber with rough warriors, like Nadir Shah, like Timour the Great. I'd see the house Baber dwelt in in Babool; I'd eat his favourite melons, for which he sighed when in Hindoostan. I'd have what I pant for—Revenge! How sweet even the word is to utter—Revenge!”

Deoti was astonished at the energy of the princess—say, rather, tigress. She saw before her a mere girl—but what a spirit!

Bismillah looked at Deoti, and said: “You would have revenge, would you not?”

Deoti said—“No, Princess: revenge is sweet to think of, bitter when indulged in; it never slakes the thirst!”

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CHAPTER XXI.

A NATIVE lady of India can never resist the fascination of pawn, Cashmere shawls, pashmina, precious stones, golden ornaments, silks;—a Cashmeree servant hangs about pattoo with a loving eye.

The shawl merchants of Cashmere are the nobles of the land, as far as city influence is concerned. They do not care to hawk about their goods; but if a wealthy

customer wishes to see them, they are willing to oblige, particularly so when the purchaser is a lady of rank.

Zeenut and Bismillah were thus enabled to see the best shawls in Cashmere, at their own house, at their ease. Deoti expatiated on their qualities, her family being shawl-weavers. The fine air of Cashmere, without a speck of dust floating through it, and the water of the lake clear as crystal, combine to render the colours of Cashmere shawls unrivalled: they are made at Loodiana, Umritsur, Noorpoor, and at Islamabad in the valley of Cashmere; but even at the latter place are far inferior to those of Sireenuggur, and fetch a much more moderate price. Thousands—forty or fifty thousand people—are employed in making shawls at Sireenuggur; there are six thousand work-shops. Long shawls, square shawls, for the Indian, Paris, and London markets; shawls for the Persian and Constantinople marts; handkerchiefs for Russia and England. Shawls, with a shawl border to a white pashmina ground, styled furads, are in favour in Hindoostan. There are worked shawls at Cashmere, and loom shawls; a good worked shawl costs Rs. 300 or £30, a pair of good loom shawls Rs. 1000 or £100. The embroidery work on pashmina is much admired; pashmina itself is dear, Rs. 7 or Rs. 8 a yard. A good piece of pattoo will cost 8 annas a yard.

Zeenut Begum ordered a pair of loom shawls, and enough pashmina of a dove colour to serve for a scarf for herself and Bismillah, and jacket for each. Tailors were immediately engaged to embroider the scarfs and jackets. The Cashmere tailors are celebrated for their

skill in embroidering with coloured silks, and gold and silver thread.

Deoti was treated with a fawn-coloured pattoo dress, which gave her great pleasure. She packed it up carefully for the winter, when it would be really required.

As to the gold ornaments, Zeenut proclaimed them at once inferior to those of Delhi—not, indeed, worth purchasing. The stones were, however, much admired—turquoises, carbuncles, lapis lazuli, opals, rubies, blood-stones, agates, and carnelians.

The Cashmere jewellers are expert at making up composition stones. Bismillah, with her sharp eyes, at once detected the false stones, and said—“We must punish this false man.”

The jeweller was off in a moment, leaving his assistant to pack up his goods.

All must admire the papier maché articles at Cashmere: they deserve encouragement, and orders from Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. The designs are good, and the colouring particularly bright. Inkstands, work-boxes, trays, &c., are procurable.

Pashmina is made of the fine wool of the hill goat, furnished by nature to protect him from the deadly cold of winter. Pattoo is made from the coarser hair. Wool is imported from the north to Cashmere in large quantities. But the real pashmina-yielding goats do not live in the valley of Cashmere.

CHAPTER XXII.

IT was a lovely morning in the month of June. The Throne of Solomon, a hill about a thousand feet high, and two miles from Bismillah's house, had been fixed on for a day's pic-nic. It is from the top of this far-famed hill that the best view of the Valley of Cashmere is obtained. It was not yet light when our travellers arrived in a boat at the quay of the Amra Bridge over the Jhelum. They there found two doolies, which had been borrowed by Indad Ali from a shawl merchant in the city. They had arched roofs, high enough to allow of a person sitting in them with comfort, without the head being too close to the roof, which is unpleasant, especially when the sun beats fiercely on it. Each doolie was furnished with eight men; four to carry it, the other four serving as a relay. The doolies were covered with red cloth outside, embroidered with gold thread; and lined with crimson silk. There was a mattress to each doolie, and a pillow for the back and sides, of yellow Lahore silk, trimmed with green. As soon as the party were all settled, off they set, Indad Ali and Zynooddeen on foot, also Deoti, who held a small stick in her hand, and had charge of a coolie who carried a basket with cups, a teapot, milk, bread fresh from the baker's, &c.; another coolie carried water and wood—nothing can be procured at the top of the Throne, except a fine view.

The Amra Bazar was soon passed—an irregular mass of houses, whose owners drive a good trade with English officers and their retainers during the season. In a few

minutes the fine poplar Pathan avenue was reached ; it runs at right angles to the Throne of Solomon, and is about a mile long. There is a small hill at the end of it, on which there formerly was a summer-house : here the Chief of Cashmere, a Pathan used to sit and entertain his sowars,—a race up the avenue on a horse which had been starved for three days tested the metal of both horse and rider. The entrance to the Shaik Garden, planted by Imamoodeen, the former Governor of Cashmere, was passed,—it is on the right hand ; on the left, a few houses occupied by fakeers and servants of the court were marked, embosomed amongst trees. The river Jhelum was on the right hand, the Apple Canal on the left ; the space between the two being covered with turf and scanty cultivation, which the half-wild pigs in the vicinity of Cashmere play sad havoc with. The banks of the canal and river are ornamented with rows of poplar trees. Now we glide by the houses occupied by British officers who are on leave at Cashmere ; they are built on the bank of the Jhelum, and appear to be full, since we mark fifteen or twenty small tents in the orchard and garden, which come up close to the road along the poplar avenue. Now the country opens, the river and canal receding. There is an amphitheatre of mountains in front, beyond the Throne of Solomon ; and far, far in the distance, we observe the magnificent Hurmookh Mountains, towering above everything. Amongst the trees on the left hand, the citadel of the Huri Purbut shines out brightly ; it has caught the rays of the rising sun. Over a bridge, passing the small hill on the other side by a turn to the right, and again making a sharp turn to the left, up a slight ascent, the

path up the Throne of Solomon is before us; a burial-ground behind us. The party halted for a moment, Bismillah under a weeping willow; and not far off sat an English officer under an aspen tree. Bismillah marked the iris in the churchyard, and thought of the saying of the old Emperor now no more.

Deoti simply remarked to Bismillah,—“Princess, you stand under the weeping willow, the Feringhee under the aspen tree: see how the leaves tremble!”

Bismillah replied—“Girl, why remind me of the fallen destinies of a Timour? 'Tis indeed true the very trees weep over us,—but they tremble over the head of the Feringhee!”

The ascent up the Throne of Solomon is by steps; the road is steep, and it takes about three-quarters of an hour to reach the summit. It has been gained. The road close to the old Hindoo temple, the Shunker Acharig, is very steep and narrow. This temple, a place of great sanctity, has stemmed the blast of ages; it is said to be three thousand years old. To it pilgrims resort from all parts of India. The old priest was in attendance: he presented a few cardamoms to Bismillah, and one to Zeenut, and invited them to ascend to the octagonal platform which surrounds the temple. The ascent is by a flight of very steep, well-cut stone steps, which are guarded by a deer fixed into an elegantly-cut archway. The fakeer or priest was dressed in orange-coloured clothes, with a cap of the same colour. He had a string of black beads in his hand. He lives in a house close to the poplar avenue, and crowns the Takht every day during the year.

The fakeer took Deoti's small stick from her hand,

and offered to point out the chief objects of attraction in the valley. To this proposition both Zeenut and Bismillah readily agreed, and thanked the old man for his politeness.

“Mark,” said the old priest, pointing to the east, “that thin silver line: on, on it comes, more and more distinct, until you see it, at the foot of the Throne, the fine broad stream of the Jhelum. Its curvatures are very elegant, like those of the supple snake. Note that hill well to the east: under its protecting shade lies the town of Islamabad, famed, as you may perhaps know, for its shawls and pattoo patch-work carpets. Near Islamabad you have the holy place of Muttun, with its tank of sacred fish; but its glory has departed since the Feringhee Carey, with impious hand, destroyed the proud fish Ragoo Ram. He was bright as gold, and drove away the plague from the valley. Alas! poor Ragoo Ram!”—and the old priest burst into tears.

As soon as he had recovered, he again pointed to high ground beyond the hill of Islamabad, and said—“There stands the far-famed temple of Martund; you must visit it: it is the work of the Pandhu race—a wonder of past ages. Again, beyond Islamabad, we have the ruined gardens of Ach-bal, and further on those of Vir nag; it is from the latter place that the river Jhelum rises. These were the places in which your ancestors, oh Princesses! used to love to spend their time.” He paused, looked hard at Zeenut and Bismillah, and proceeded—

“Now look towards the west: again trace the course of the Jhelum from Baramullah, where it leaves the plains, past Sopur, past Chutterbal, through the city of

Sireenuggur, until it joins the stream from Islamabad at the foot of the Throne. Mountains you have in profusion; they encircle the valley. How lovely they are; they girt it for a circuit of two hundred or two hundred and fifty miles. The valley is ninety miles long, by twenty-five miles wide. To the south you see the Peer Pinjal Range, which preserves the valley from a too easy contact with the plains of the Punjab; to the north you have the Hurmookh Mountains, and those which bound the Sireenuggur Lake. But you must change your position, the temple prevents your seeing them clearly. to the east you have the hills of Kishtwur, Bunhal, Mahao, Sundrhoo, Kosrin, and Kuthar; on the west those of Kamraj, Kurnal, and Bangash.

“Now look towards the city: it looks flat; it wants the fine minarets of Delhi, and its far-famed palaces and mosques, to render it beautiful—still it is attractive, buried, as it is, among the mountains, apart from the world. There is the Maharaja’s palace; the sun shines on the golden cupola of the dhurumsala where Maharaja Goolab Sing died. There is the Huri Purbut Fort, originally built by the Emperor Akbar, at the cost of Rs. 10,000,000. The city is built, as you can see, on the two banks of the river, and on its numerous canals; the population is thickest between the Huri Purbut and the river. You now know exactly how the valley lies; you look up and down it. You came up the Pathan poplar avenue: there it is at your feet; there are the houses of the Feringhees—but I know you care not to hear about them. There—view the lake spread out like a vast mirror: how clear its waters; how truly it reflects the passing clouds—how brilliantly;

it is, however, somewhat spoiled by our rulers allowing so much aquatic vegetation to spread over its surface—it deadens the waters of the lake. There are the gardens of Nishut Shalimar, Nasum, the Isle of Chenars—you can almost hear the

‘Nightingale’s hymn from the Isle of Chenars!’

You just see the Wallar Lake—a mere streak; it is there to the west. Under that small hill lies the Manus Lake.

“It was on the banks of the lake that the Emperors of Delhi used to live, with their courtiers: most of the buildings have now gone to ruin, but trees attest the places where feasting and revelry were once the order of the day. We must all pass away; we must all yield to death, fair ladies. Hark! how the thunder rolls amongst the peaks of Ilurmookh; mark the flash of the lightning, observe the dark masses of clouds; but all is sunshine in the valley—it smiles over villages, rice-grounds, corn-fields, morasses, shrines; the young, the old; flocks and herds. Ladies, you did well to come to the most lovely spot on the earth—to Cashmere. But what do I see?—look, ladies, look!”

An Englishman, with a rifle, picked his way with caution along the face of the Throne towards the lake. He wore grass shoes, to prevent his slipping, and was making his way towards a small forest on its side. He walked with extreme difficulty. Deoti, with her sharp eyes, soon perceived a large black bear on the confines of the forest: she pointed it out to Bismillah, who at once exclaimed,—“We shall now see the Feringhee kill the bear!”

The bear at first took no notice of the intruder; he continued eating the fruit, of which he appeared to have collected an ample store. The Englishman advanced; the bear looked round, and calmly drew himself up to his full height of from five to six feet, faced his foe, and came on, making a hideous noise. The Englishman walked with difficulty; the bear was close to him.

"He fires!" said Bismillah.

"The bear advances!" cried Deoti.

"He fires again!" said Bismillah.

"The bear is close to the Feringhee—he will kill him!" called out Deoti.

The Englishman threw down his rifle, and drew his hunting knife; it glanced in the sun. In another moment, the bear or the Englishman must perish!

"Strike hard, bold Feringhee!" screamed Bismillah, in the excitement of the moment.

The knife struck the bear; he roared; clasped his arms, on air, and tumbled down the precipice.

"A brave Feringhee!" said Bismillah.

"He should be so!" said Indad Ali—"he has the blood of a Timour in his veins!"

"Of whom?" shrieked Bismillah.

Indad Ali whispered into Bismillah's ear,—“You see before you the Descendant of the Pearl, Captain Charles Orlando DeLaré, Deputy Commissioner of Shahpoor.”

Bismillah trembled as she said,—“The man who saved me from the cruel Sikh has now proved before my face his bravery by killing a bear!”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE morning after DeLaré's successful slaughter of the black bear on the side of the Throne of Solomon, he was sitting indolently, his feet on a table, reading an amusing editorial in the *Mofussilite* newspaper, when a visitor was announced—a Native,—in short, our old friend Indad Ali. With a graceful address, and a neat, well-arranged speech, Indad Ali placed a *khut* or Native letter in DeLaré's hand. Knowing that few British officers can read a Native letter, or, if they can spell through it, understand its meaning correctly, Indad Ali asked permission to open and read the *khut*; it was readily granted. The *khut* ran thus:—

“To our Cousin, a Recogniser of Worth, a Dispeller of the Sorrows of his Friends; to CHARLES ORLANDO DELARE, health and prosperity !

“After compliments—the messengers of good understanding. Be it known to you, that we feel most anxious to meet one who can justly lay claim to a royal lineage. We have for years heard of the Pearl, and welcome her descendant. We trust that you will pay us a visit to-morrow evening.

“My sister Zeenut presents her best compliments.

“BISMILLAH.”

“*Dated 30th June, 1860; SIREENUGGUR.*”

DeLaré at once became aware of the gravity of the case; the tie of relationship demanded that he should at once accede to the kind invitation; but what would the

Punjab Government say? How would Mr. Blubber, poor Poppy's successor, interpret the meeting? Would he regard it as a political move, and put it on the same footing as the Orleans compact? Then the case of Limo was a precedent; a young fellow was pulled up before the authorities of Calcutta assembled in council, for a breach of decorum;—it turned out that Limo, poor fellow, had driven in a buggy with his own aunt. And Bismillah was DeLaré's cousin.

Indad Ali knew what was passing in DeLaré's mind, and cleverly remarked,—“The meeting will be quite private, and an English officer always visits his cousin when invited to do so.”

DeLaré accepted the invitation, in these words:—

“MY DEAR BISMILLAH,—I have much pleasure in accepting your kind invitation for to-morrow evening.

“Your affectionate Cousin,

“CHARLES ORLANDO DELARÉ.”

“SIREENUGGUR, *June 30th*, 1860.

When it was the proper time for the interview, DeLaré set out with Indad Ali, in a boat, which had, according to Delhi etiquette, been sent to escort so distinguished a guest. But what was DeLaré's surprise to find the house occupied by Bismillah brilliantly illuminated. The effect was good; the lights being reflected in the clear waters of the Jhelum. The boats on the side of the river had caught the infection, and decked themselves out with a few lights; the priest of the shrine of Shah Hamdan had also illuminated in

honour of the Delhi princesses, who, it was now well known, were about to entertain a noble Feringhee.

DeLaré stepped on shore; the Cashmeree people bowed to the ground without any motion of the hand (the custom of the country); the kotwal of the city was present; the Native newswriter, and a guard of honour with a band, sent by the order of the Maharaja; arms were presented, and the band struck up "God save the Queen!"—What *would* Blubber say?

But DeLaré stood in the presence of the Princesses of the house of Timour. He was kindly and elegantly welcomed. We cannot enumerate the high flown courtly phrases which Zeenut and Bismillah showered on him. All were soon seated, and DeLaré, for the first time in his life, became aware of the wretched Hindustanee which he spoke,—he could not return a single compliment!

Bismillah at once perceived his embarrassment, and said—"Our Cousin is silent to-night—wherefore?"

DeLaré stammered out,—"*Ham log bare khosh!*" (Literally, We people are very happy!)

Bismillah could not resist this infamous attempt at Oordoo, and burst out laughing. Kindly taking DeLaré's hand, she said, satirically,—"*Our Cousin is, we know, a Roostum; he can also, we hear, sing, dance, smoke, draw, and drink wine; but there is one thing he cannot do—he cannot speak Hindustanee! Oh fie! Cousin; and you a Judge over our people! How do you manage in court?*"

DeLaré replied, his face as red as crimson,—"*Hamara Serishtadar bisia dianat dar, sub kooch karta; ham sirif*

.

hookam." (Our Serishtadar is very honest ; he does everything—we only order).

"My dear Cousin," said Bismillah, "I will teach you Hindustanee,—real, good Court Oordoo ; but you must forget one or two ante-Mahomedan habits : you must not sing—bah, a Judge sing ! You must not dance—I blush to talk of a cousin of mine dancing in public ! You must promise not to drink wine—it is forbidden to the Faithful ! You shall have tea : Deoti, bring tea !"

"And do you really dance in public with the fair dancers of your country ?" asked Bismillah, slyly.

At another time DeLaré would have descanted on quadrilles, waltzes, and polkas ; he now merely briefly replied—"Now and then."

"And are the ladies of England really," said Bismillah, averting her face, and trying to look unconcerned, "so very lovely ?"

Now here was a fine opening for DeLaré to try a compliment : he attempted it and said,—"*Toom bisia khoobsoorut ; Valayatee beebie barabur.*" (You are very beautiful ; the foreign lady equal).

Bismillah was touched with the compliment, and remarked,—"*You mean, I fancy, to say that I am equal to the English ladies in beauty. Now I will turn your sentence into fluent Oordoo—repeat the words after me : 'What difference can there be between two roses of surpassing beauty ?'*"

It was now time to break up. DeLaré took his leave, promising to call again. He entered his boat completely crestfallen ; the Deputy Commissioner of Shahpoor not able to speak Oordoo !—what *will* Blubber say ?

* * * * *

Blubber was writing a telegraphic message to Calcutta from Lahore, with the words "All's well!"—when a horseman dashed into the compound, his horse in a foam. A telegraphic message!—Blubber has fainted.

"Most important and urgent."

"DeLaré held a private meeting last night with two of the Princesses of the family of Timour, at Sireenuggur!"

Blubber recovered, and languidly telegraphed to Calcutta—

"All's well—except that DeLaré, Deputy Commissioner of Shahpoor, had a private meeting last night with two Delhi Princesses at Sircenuggur."

The message reached Calcutta: the words "plot" and "treason" were added by an officious clerk on the road. The news spread like wildfire; the bugles of the different corps stationed at Calcutta sounded the alarm; there was a panic; all rushed to Government House; the Volunteers perspired down the street without arms, their uniforms in bundles—speed was the word; the Sudder judges, H. M.'s judges, barristers, attorneys, merchants, ship captains, the indigo committee, the police committee, the finance committee, the legislative council—all drove, rode or ran to Government House. Mr. Beadon quietly, and in a cautious, cat-like fashion, placed the telegraphic message in the Governor-General's hands. His Lordship rose with courtly dignity, walked into the hall of Government House,

which was now nearly stuffed full, and said,—“Gentlemen, I thank you for your loyalty ; there is no occasion for a panic : Charles Orlando DeLaré, a Captain in Her Majesty’s service, has only taken a cup of tea with his cousins at Cashmere !”

CHAPTER XXIV.

BABOO MAHESH CHUND is the official specially deputed by His Highness the Maharaja of Jumoo to attend on the English visitors at Cashmere. He has adopted the Dogra dress, and married a Dogra wife. His invariable reply to all officers, whether they require coolies, ducks, geese, sheep, goats, shawls, carpets, blankets, or passports, is invariably this,—“I shall see, Sir !” Strip off the fierce Dogra attire, and we have a pure, simple, Calcutta Baboo. We do not know how English officers, and especially the Royals, could get on without Baboo Mahesh Chund. He has a long roll of paper, on which all English officers enter their names, upon visiting Cashmere. We also had an order-book, of which the analysis is this—“Gentlemen must not kill cows, herons, [prized for their plumes—in great favour with the Dogra chiefs,] must not fish within the bridges, [an order in force since Maharaja Goolab Sing’s death,*] should not get into debt, should pay all bills regularly, must not beat poor helpless Natives !”

Baboo Mahesh Chund is always in good spirits : what elixir does he possess ? He smiles on all fresh arrivals,

* It was believed that the spirit of the late ruler, Goolab Sing, had passed into a fish.

and presents them, in the name of the Maharaja, with eatables. When the visitor leaves Cashmere, he repeats the same kind office. Alas ! for reform : in the good old days, the Jumoo court fed the British officer from the time he entered the Jumoo territory until he quitted it. Who can resist the Baboo's kind invitation ? Did any officer ever dare to refuse it, when he says so blandly—"The Maharaja invite you to grand dinner to-morrow."

* * * *

Horsemen went and came at full speed up and down the banks of the river towards Islamabad, to bring tidings of two distinguished visitors—Poppy and Popkins. Our friends are on their way to Sircenuggur, having crossed the Great Peer, and made a *détour* to Islamabad *via* Shapyan, and will make their public entrance as becomes their rank. To use the classical English of the Baboo—"Two big gentlemen presently honour Sircenuggur."

The Governor of Cashmere was ill, so the ceremony of meeting our heroes devolved on Colonel Bija Sing, a huge Dogra, Deputy Governor of Cashmere : a brave old man, dressed in a full-dress naval uniform, with epaulettes of a general officer, a full-dress cavalry officer's sword, gauntlets of polished steel, patent leather boots, a turban of red silk with gold embroidery, ornamented with a plume of heron's feathers. The Deputy Governor was in a boat called a flying-boat, rowed by twenty men fore and aft, one man steering it. He was accompanied by a guard of honour in red uniform, and other court attendants. The Baboo followed in his boat, the newswriter in his.

Poppy approaches in his boat—a large affair, capable of holding ten people with their chairs conveniently arranged; it was rowed by forty men, and was commanded by a captain. The happy meeting took place; Poppy bowed as only a man can bow who has been behind a counter all his life. Who does not remember the London tradesman, as he blandly puts his hands on the counter, bows, and shows his teeth—especially to female customers! The bungalows located in the lovely suburb close to the Pathan avenue, occupied by English officers, have been passed; the Shaik Garden, the palace; the guard turns out, a salute is fired—how the blood thrilled in Poppy's veins. This was the reward of competition. The boat stops, there is an interview with Colonel Bija Sing on land, and the crowd disperses,—all have taken their leave. But another crowd approaches: Baboo Mahesh Chund never slumbers: he has marshalled his forces—old men, old women, little boys and girls, all bending under the weight of eatables, the gift of the Maharaja. With a proud air he has arranged his dalis (offerings)—countless earthen pots full of all good things. What was there not in these jars? Mrs. Poppy noted down in her account-book sugar, honey, rice, walnuts, raisins, almonds, tea, cloves, ginger; had she continued to look into the jars, she would have had as troublesome a duty as Margarettta inspecting the jars containing the forty thieves!

"All ready, gentlemen and ladies!—the Maharaja has sent you both dalis," said the Baboo, casting a fatherly look on Poppy, Popkins, and their belongings.

Who ever refused Mahesh Chund's offering? If so, he must have just been on the verge of a bilious fever

Mrs. Poppy put the forefinger of her right hand into the honey-jar, sucked it, and pronounced the contents excellent—not regarding Poppy's classical warning as to the honey which fell to the lot of the ten thousand, and made them all sick !

There was now a struggle on the stairs—voices both encouraging and threatening : the mystery was soon solved, as ten reluctant rams were dragged into the room, almost throttled, their eyes starting out of their heads.

“Maharaja, send ten fine sheep for gentlemen,” said the Baboo.

Now, who has ever been able to manage the Baboo's mutton ? It may be good, but who was ever so daring as to stretch forth the knife, and slay one of the Baboo's tender rams ? Who ever saw the Baboo's rams slaughtered ? They are old stagers, these rams, who pass the season in walking up and down the stairs of the houses of British officers when at Cashmere, and then renovate their strength during the winter in the cold mountains around the valley. Who so happy when the season is ended as Baboo Mahesh Chund's rams ?

The Baboo has departed ; the rams have again been sent to graze in the cool green meadows on the banks of the Jhelum.

Poppy and Popkins have divested themselves of their political uniforms, and have fallen asleep, wearied with the glorious reception at Sireenuggur, and dreaming of Baboo Mahesh Chund, and his rams. Mrs. Poppy and Mrs. Popkins have opened and are enjoying the jar of honey !

CHAPTER XXV.

MAJOR ELPHINSTONE was the political officer appointed by Government to superintend the British officers on leave at Cashmere for the season of 1860. He was one of those relics which the Indian mutiny has bequeathed to society—a man without a regiment, anxiously bracing himself up for amalgamation. Major Elphinstone had never been to England since he first started thirty years before in a sailing ship for the land of the pagoda tree. India had become his home; he knew nothing of the advance of European civilisation practically; he had never experienced the pleasures of a trip by the Great Western or Brighton Express. Tents and hackeries were to the Major the perfection of travelling. There was a vast difference between Sir Lionel Warburton, commanding the Peshawur division, and Major Elphinstone: the former was a Queen's officer, who had been employed in the Crimea, about forty-five years old; he had particularly distinguished himself, and had risen rapidly: but the latter was still only a captain in his defunct corps. Major Elphinstone and his sympathies were all with men of the past—with Nott, Pollock, Gilbert, Littler, Mayne, Richmond, Pottinger, Sleeman, Pattle, Casement, Broadfoot,—in fact, all Elphinstone's best friends were dead. His anecdotes and conversation, said a witty young officer of the Rifles, “always smelt of plumes, mutes, and a hearse with four black horses.” Old Llewelyn of Calcutta had long since paid the last tribute of respect to many of Elphinstone's friends; he had marked their declining health with feelings of satis-

faction as he met them at church Sunday after Sunday; he knew what all would eventually come to, but he said nothing. Sir Lionel, on the contrary, cared not for black fellows or black troops—he knew nothing of them or the country, and did not wish to do so. He was out in India for five years, and then bound for home. He talked of living men—of the Duke of Cambridge, of Lord Palmerston, of Cardigan, of Bright, of Gladstone, of the Russian war and the generals who took part in it; he spoke freely, and cared not for Governor-General, Lieutenant-Governors, or purse-proud civilians; he looked at Poppy as a cad, snob, interloper! In short, Sir Lionel was a fine, handsome, determined, polished Englishman.

Poor Elphinstone found he was quite shut up when in Sir Lionel's society: he talked about the Cabool war, Sikh war, mutiny; told stories of old Pattle's manufacture, discussed the merits of caste, the hot and cold stations of India, healthy and unhealthy; and fancied he was getting on well with the General.

The General listened politely and attentively for some time, and then, with the most polished manner possible, took Elphinstone's hand, and said—"My dear fellow, you will soon be amalgamated with Her Majesty's army; let me advise you, as a friend, to change your style of conversation; if not, you will never get on. Get out of your old way of thinking, of talking, of reading. Go home at once—you have never been home for thirty years. Do not interlard your sentences with Hindustanee. Get rid of your yellow complexion (excuse me) and never talk of India. That story of yours about old Pattle and the serpent which became so cautious as to

go into its hole tail foremost is very wonderful, very funny; but no one will believe it."

Major Elphinstone sighed: he had been a wit at the mess-table years ago; to whom should he now retail his stories, which were inflaming his brain. Yet Elphinstone knew India and its people to a nicety—in fact was an authority; he, however, now felt the insignificance of his attainments as compared with those of Sir Lionel, who was really a well-informed, clever, sagacious man of the world. Elphinstone at once applied for furlough to England, much to Sir Lionel's joy, who gaily remarked—"You will soon get your complexion cleared with the waters at Aix la Chapelle; but I fear it will take some time to cure you of your Indian tricks!"

Major Elphinstone marshalled his fellow-countrymen on the day the Maharaja of Jumoo was to make his public entrance into Sireenuggur in 1860, after an absence of three years. What excitement there was in the town! Major Elphinstone was well mounted, but he could not come up to Sir Lionel in his style of riding; he felt mean on horseback. The cavalcade started, horseman after horseman flying off to announce the approach of H. M.'s Agent. Officers of the court came to meet the cavalcade, sent expressly by the Maharaja, dressed in all the colours of the rainbow. A portion of the troops were met drawn up about five miles from Sireenuggur. The heir apparent hands in Major Elphinstone and Sir Lionel. The Maharaja welcomes his guests in an easy manner; the usual nuzzurs are presented, accepted, returned. The party again starts, after having sat for about ten minutes in an open shamianah (a kind of tent) protected by pur-

dahs, and made very comfortable with handsome floor-cloths. The Maharaja stops on the road for a few minutes, at the Ram Garden, at the Samud, the place where his father Maharaja Goolab Sing was burnt, and then the parade-ground is reached, where about eight thousand men are reviewed, the collected bands of the regiments playing several lively English tunes. On a sudden off gallops the Maharaja; he must enter his palace at the propitious moment announced by his Brahmin, who has marked the exact moment by a fine watch made by Dent.

The English visitors separated. Major Elphinstone remarked to Sir Lionel—"This is a custom of Hindustan; a very old habit amongst Native chiefs—derived from the Vedas."

Sir Lionel looked hard at the Major, and said—"These heathenish practices must be put a stop to now the country is ruled by Her Majesty's Government, and a European army: it was all very well putting up with such absurdities while the Native army ruled India."

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was a holiday at Sireenuggur. His Highness the Maharaja of Jumoo had invited his English visitors to a dinner, to take place at sunset. The invitations were delivered verbally by Baboo Mahesh Chund—they were all accepted. At early dawn there was a grand slaughter of sheep, ducks, and geese; by the evening they assumed those shapes so agreeable to the diner out. It is beyond

our power to describe the good things which graced the table on the evening in question. Gunter would have blushed at his own incapacity, and Soyer would have fainted. The hour of dinner drew near. Flying boats were despatched, with confidential ministers, to escort the most distinguished guests, for there was to be a grand gathering. The guests are arriving in crowds; boat after boat shoots down the river, and anchors opposite to the Maharaja's palace. Menials rush to and fro, screaming out the titles of the visitors, who land, mount a ladder, and pass through an entrance to a court-yard, where a guard of honour is drawn up. There were generals, brigadiers, colonels, majors, commissioners, politicals, and some small fry. A menial rushed to a boat of prepossessing look, raised the purdah, dropped it with a disappointed air, and exclaimed with pathos, "Siraf Talinga!"—(Only an infantry officer of a Native corps!) Poor menial, we pity him.

The Prime Minister met the Political Agent, Major Elphinstone, in the court-yard; he did not advance a step beyond what was proper. He took his hand, he took the General's hand, Sir Lionel's also, and wished he had a dozen hands. The big-wigs thus moved on with dignity to the reception-room. On its steps, Mean Pertab Sing, the heir apparent, an engaging boy of eleven, met the party, and in a courtier-like manner introduced the big-wigs to his father. The Maharaja welcomed his guests in an easy, polished way, and requested that all would be seated. The chief ministers of the Jumoo court stood behind the Maharaja, none being allowed the honour of a chair except the British

officers. Our old friend the newswriter was also present, stretching out his neck like a crane for every tit-bit of news. Poppy and Popkins made their appearance in full political uniform. The seats were placed outside the banquetting-hall, on a platform overlooking the river. It was now nearly evening; the dancing women commenced their performance: who can describe their beauty, who translate their touching songs into appropriate English. Conversation became general, the newswriter's neck longer than ever. One gentleman was pointed out to Indad Ali, who had stepped into the midst of the throng, as being a hundred years old—"He possesses the Water of Life!" said the courtier.

"The English possess everything," replied Indad Ali.

"What song is that which the Prima Donna is singing?" asked a gentleman of the newswriter.

"Hindee, may it please your highness," said the newswriter.

"It sounds like French to me," said DeLaré.

Baboo Mahesh Chund now advances, and with a pleasant smile announces—"Dinner."

* * * *

All are seated: what eating, what drinking, what bumpers of champagne! Who could lay his hand on his heart and say he felt hungry or thirsty after dinner?

The Maharaja's health was proposed, and a number of other toasts.

* * * *

Dancing again commenced, and all were very jolly. Major Elphinstone rose; all wished the Maharaja of

Jumoo good-bye. It was thus that the Chief of Jumoo entertained his English guests. We shall enjoy those pleasant meetings no more ; but perhaps the gentleman may who possesses the " Water of Life."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE Hindoo mythology, like that of the Greeks, carries us back to those dark ages, when the fancy supplies the space which history should occupy with the deeds of gods and goddesses. Cashmere has come in for its full share of fabulous stories. We find the valley in early times a vast lake, pervaded by the Spirit of the Deity ; but a passage effected for the river Jhelum through the Baramullah Pass gradually cleared away the mist of superstition, and the valley became peopled. For 3,783 years we read of Hindoo princes as living and dying, each anxious to mark his reign by some astounding novelty ; but as time advances, events become more clearly defined, and in 1309 A.D. we meet with the Chakan race of kings, Moslems, exercising considerable power. But it is not until the reign of the Emperor Akbar Julalooddeen that we feel any real interest in the history of Cashmere as casual readers ; earlier dates may perhaps soothe the mind of the antiquary. It was with considerable difficulty that Akbar conquered Cashmere : he was several times defeated ; but he at last succeeded, and Cashmere fared well under the Delhi emperors ; its valley was embel-

lished with choice palaces, mosques, summer-houses, and fountains—there were more than seven hundred gardens on the banks of the Sireenuggur lake, belonging to the courtiers and officials of Delhi. Of the Delhi kings we may enumerate Akbar, Jehangeer Shah, Shah Jehan, Alumgeer, Shah Alum, Iskander Shah, Ferokehseer, and Mahomed Shah. Kashtkar was added to Cashmere in the time of Jehangeer Shah, Thibet in the reign of Shah Jehan. After the decline of the Delhi emperors, Cashmere fell to the lot of the Affghans, who plundered it, and committed all manner of extortion and oppression. The Delhi rule under Akbar, Jehangeer, and Shah Jehan, was that of a humane government, but the Affghans played the part of barbarians, attempting to obliterate the memory of a good government by destroying or defacing the chaste and elegant buildings erected by the Mogul emperors. But their mild rule is still cherished in the traditionary stories current amongst the people of the valley. The Sikh rule commenced in A.D. 1818, when Maharaja Runjeet Sing wrested the valley from the Pathans. The garrison at the time of the capture of Cashmere was weak; many of the chief men were absent at Cabool. The Sikhs were guilty of many excesses. Their rule was terminated by the treaty of 1846, when the valley passed into the hands of Maharaja Goolab Sing for the sum of seventy-five lakhs of rupees. A jewel which cannot be equalled in the world was thus parted with, together with a population of two millions and a half, for a sum not equal to two years' purchase-money, since Cashmere yields a revenue of forty lakhs of rupees a-year.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE kingdom of Jumoo possesses some of the most attractive spots in the world. Take your map and observe its vast extent; it is almost as large as Britain. The province of Cashmere is but a small portion of the Maharaja's territory: look far, far to the north,—Gilgit is his, Iskardo is his, Ladak is his; then there is the province of Jumoo, and the states to the south of the Peer Pinjal Range, which joins the plains of the Punjab. Whilst the people of the Jumoo country are mostly Hindoos, the inhabitants of Cashmere are principally Mahomedans, converted from Hindooism by the sword. At Sireenuggur we find a clan of Cashmeree Brahmins; they are timid, fawning, subtle, and occupy most of the subordinate official civil posts in the province. They are instructed in Persian, and are capital accountants; and from their pliancy of character can adapt themselves to almost any work which is conducted through the medium of the pen. As to the sword, they repudiate it altogether. As we advance to the north, we still meet with Mahomedans of quite a different race from the Mahomedans of Cashmere: but eventually we find ourselves amongst the Buddhists—we have reached the collateral tribes of Chinese Tartary.

On arriving at Cashmere, we have a palpable fact brought to our notice—that the Russian frontier post of Ak Musjid is only about two hundred miles distant from the frontier of His Highness the Maharaja of Jumoo. We also at once perceive the advantage to us of opening out a trade with Central Asia *via* Yarkund, a large city,

under a Moslem ruler subservient to the court of Peking, or the Great Khan, as the emperor is designated. This city contains a population of 300,000 people, and is described as wealthy and flourishing. It is incumbent on us to make our own power felt in the states bordering on the Russian outposts. The great question is this: can we or can we not, with the sea carriage at our disposal, and the railways which will soon be ploughing India, come into the market of Central Asia and undersell those European goods which have been transported by land carriage from the quays of St. Petersburg? The question is one which deserves due attention and consideration at our hands.

The chief trade of Sircenuggur is in shawls; but its position entitles it to take a much more prominent part in the trade of the world than it does at present. The trade in shawls is of modern origin; the craft was introduced from Persia about a hundred years ago. Cashmere shawls are now celebrated through the known world. There is every variety of soil and climate in the state of Jumoo; whilst in the highlands the snowdrop has to contend with drifts of snow in its attempts to raise its head, the wheat is ready for the sickle near Bhimber, which is close to the plains: in short, a climate may be found in the Jumoo state suited either to the European who revels in cold air, or the Native, who looks upon a burning sun as perfection. Tea can be grown to any extent; also potatoes, and indigo; wild herbs are found in abundance. We have mines of wealth, probably gold and silver—the former is washed down by the mountain streams into the valleys; we can speak of iron and copper with certainty, as also coal, which is

to be found near Rajoree, on the road from Bhimber to Cashmere. The amount of timber available for railways and buildings in the plains appears almost inexhaustible.* We have a rural population in Cashmere, which, although unwarlike, furnishes capital subjects, hardy and enduring; and also towns-people with a finer organisation. They are very sharp and clever, both with the hand and eye. It is to Cashmere the remark of the late Mr. Wilson does indeed with truth apply—"A richer soil, a finer climate, a more industrious, active, and frugal, and I will add docile population, it would be difficult to find anywhere."

Cashmere was acquired by the Jumoo state by a treaty with the British Government in 1846. Jumoo is the original seat of government. It was from this place, years ago, that three brothers set out—poor, brave, and ambitious. At first they were content to devote their services to the court of Lahore, at that time ruled by Maharaja Runjeet Sing, as common horsemen. But stirring qualities are not long hid in a court where so many are attempting to climb the ladder; the best capacities rise the quickest and the highest, where there is, as is the case with eastern courts, so often the call for the right man in the right place. Maharaja Goolab Sing rose step by step to an almost independent rule at Jumoo; his brothers Dhyan Sing and Soochet Sing followed close on his heels. Dhyan Sing became prime minister to the Lahore court, and fell on the same day that Maharaja Shere Sing was so treacherously murdered. Soochet Sing also fell a victim to the fury of

* A forest department, to regulate the cutting of trees, is a necessity.

the disorganised Sikh soldiery. Raja Heera Sing avenged his father Dhyān Sing's death, rose to power, but could not stem the torrent of military disorganisation, and fell. Mean Sohan Sing, a son of Maharaja Goolab Sing, was also killed at the same time. Prior to this, the eldest son of Maharaja Goolab Sing, Mean Udam Sing, met his death, on the day that Maharaja Nao Nehal Sing was killed by the falling of a mass of masonry from one of the gateways of the city of Lahore. Maharaja Goolab Sing thus saw the several members of his family pass away, but he still maintained an ever-increasing prestige. His position in the hills, through which he gradually put forth his feelers, enabled him to increase his territorial possessions; in proportion as the Lahore court grew weak, that of Jumoo waxed strong. The acquisition of the province of Cashmere stimulated the desire for further conquests. Some of the expeditions which set forth were unsuccessful, more attributable to the caprice of the climate in regions far to the north, than to any want of forethought on Goolab Sing's arrangements; but the general result was favourable to the Jumoo court, an immense accession of territory was gained for the state, together with a docile population. At Gilgit, reverses were experienced, owing to the difficulty of the position, all communication with Cashmere being cut off in the winter months. The policy of Maharaja Goolab Sing may, however, be considered as the successful result of long training in a school which demanded stern qualities. The Maharaja died in 1857, when his contingent was on the point of starting to assist the British cause during that eventful year. He sustained his far-seeing, acute intellect to the last.

The present Maharaja of Jumoo, His Highness

Runbeer Sing, is about thirty-two years old. He is handsome, possesses agreeable manners, and is, as far as position is concerned, one of the most distinguished Native chiefs in India.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHILST Indad Ali spent his time in fishing and strolling about, Zynooden fully occupied himself in praying at the shrines in and about Cashmere; it became quite a passion with him. And how did the English officers on leave spend their time? They rode but little; there is fair riding-ground about the city, but boating is the order of the day. Most officers during their stay in the valley keep a boat with seven or eight rowers; fishing occupies a good deal of their time—trying to spear a fish often sends the energetic sportsman into the water. As the hot weather comes on, the large game leave the lower for the upper mountains; the gradual approach of winter brings them back again. For bear-shooting, the ripening of mulberries, and other fruit, and of the corn, affords the sportsman an opportunity for trying his skill, which is seldom neglected; the valley of Cashmere is famed for its bear-shooting. For the elk and the ibex, the sportsman must crown the higher hills, and be prepared for a great deal of personal fatigue. The trip to Ladak is much longed after, but leave is now so short, that military men can only in few cases undertake it. The curtailment of leave has, however, enabled the officers of corps in the Punjab to generally avail themselves of the opportunity of visiting Cashmere, instead

of permission to be absent from their regiments being only acceded to a favoured few. The bathing at Cashmere is splendid; woe to the timid wretch who cannot swim across the Jhelum, but who sneaks into a quiet corner and makes his water-carrier pour a skin-full of water over his head: he should be always kept with his corps! The valley of Cashmere contains thousands of ponies—about 15,000; they are to be met with in the valley in herds, often half up to their flanks in water. The Maharaja has his own private breeding studs. In the hot season the ponies are driven up to the higher pasture-lands for grass, which grows there most luxuriantly. The cows of Cashmere are small, but the sheep are well-shaped, and finely bred. They are very like our South-Devons. The Cashmerees are very fond of fighting rams, and it is not unusual to see the owner attacked by his pet ram. They follow their masters like dogs. The wool is cut close, except a long lock between the shoulders. You will often see a man asleep on the bank of the river, and his ram keeping guard over him. Singing birds are great favourites—blackbirds, thrushes, larks, nightingales, orioles; their songs are much admired. As you may see one man asleep with a ram to watch over him, you may see a party sitting under a tree in a shady grove, listening to the song of a favourite bird, whose cage has been suspended to its branches.

Deoti soon bought a blackbird for Bismillah, and hung it up in the verandah. It was a favourite in the neighbourhood, and the passing boats would often linger under the windows of the house to catch its charming notes in the calm balmy evening of one of those days which are only found in the valley of Cashmere.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE chief town of the valley of Cashmere has shifted its position several times, as either the caprice of a ruler or the requirements of the times suggested change as necessary. At one time we find the capital at Pandren-ten, at another at Wantepoor; again at Muttun; and even Sopur can boast of having once given laws to the valley. But we have now to deal with the city of Sireenuggur, the present capital of the valley. We shall describe it before we conduct our travellers to the Lake of Sireenuggur, to lionise and spend a few happy days there. The impression of the city by moonlight is perhaps more striking than when we view it in the broad glare of the sun. All traffic is carried on in the valley by means of boats—there are thousands of them; they glide down the river by moonlight so noiselessly and stealthily that we hear the whispering in the boats and the quiet dipping of the oars in the water. The population of the city is about 300,000. Many of the houses are large, and gable-roofed, but they are principally built of wood, and being irregularly constructed, and intermixed with more humble dwellings, the effect which might be produced by fine rows of houses is lost. We miss the bazars, which are so conspicuous in Cairo. Jeypoor, Delhi, Umritsur, Bombay, and Calcutta; at Sireenuggur they are mean and insignificant, and do not face the river. In some houses, brick is made use of, but this is an exception to the general style of buildings. The shrines are, it is true, well built, often with finely-pointed brick; but we are describing the

general effect of the city. The Mahomedan places of worship are ornamented with a spire and steeple—we have seen similar buildings in Switzerland, and the southern parts of Austria; but the style of the places built for public worship is said to be an importation from China. A trip up to the top of the steeple of the Jumma Musjid will at once disclose the extent of the city. The houses look well, interspersed as they are with trees. The lattice-work in the houses at Sireenuggur is often very pretty and attractive; indeed, wood-carving for house decoration has arrived at a great state of perfection here. Verandahs overhanging the river are in great request and fashion, often covered with vines. It was at them that Indad Ali often recognised friends from all parts of India, who had come to make purchases of shawls and pashmina. The main stream of the river Jhelum is the Regent Street of Cashmere; it is protected by massively-built walls of stones, to prevent it exceeding its bounds. Houses are built on both sides of the stream, communication between the two banks being kept up by seven wooden bridges of unique construction. On the left bank there is only one canal, branching off from the river, commencing just below the palace of Sherghur, and again gaining the main stream below the last bridge. Opposite the palace, the Apple Canal conducts a visitor to the lake, and by turning to the left after the floodgates have been passed, we again meet with numerous canals, thickly lined with houses,—in fact, we reach the rear of the fine shrine of Shah Hamdan, near which our heroine, Bismillah, is residing. The Fish Canal deserves special notice; it is long, and very gloomy; the broken

portions of old Pandoo temples, which have been built into the walls, attest its antiquity. There are no public buildings deserving notice: the mint, powder magazine, and custom house, are contemptible places. If the shawl trade were removed from Sireenuggur, it would not be a wealthy city; with it a good deal of money is made annually.

In the same way that a man is ruined by horses in England, a boat and tea are often the cause of a man's becoming a bankrupt in Sireenuggur. Sireenuggur might be made one of the most attractive cities in the world: it has the capabilities; but the rose of civilisation has not as yet expanded; the city is dirty, the people by no means particular as to dress—a pauperised appearance is considered essential to security under a despotic government. Up the river, towards the Throne of Solomon, we have first the suburb occupied by European officers when on leave. Passing down it, we see the palace, a mass of ill-constructed wooden buildings, built on the foundations of an old Mahomedan fort; then we have the houses of wealthy shawl merchants, on the banks of the river. You will see houses similar to them both in Italy and Switzerland. The shrine of Shah Hamdan is always an attractive and prominent object. Lower down, we find the houses occupied by French traders, who export their goods direct to Paris. The list closes with the large dwelling-house of Rajkak, a pundit, to whose tender conscience the stamping of shawls is specially entrusted. A good deal of business is done in boats in Cashmere: they pull up opposite the owner's house, or in some cool spot, and reading, writing, accounts, political intrigues,

and gossip, are carried on in them. They are the household gods of a Cashmeree; he cannot get on without his boat. There is a large population in Cashmere which we fancy knows no other roof but that afforded by the mat which covers a boat.

Sireenuggur is a wonderful city if you look at its antecedents, and contemplate the influence which it will one day exercise on the destinies of Hindoostan.

When we landed at Trieste years ago, and walked to our hotel, a peasant girl presented us with a bunch of violets, the first-fruits of spring. A traveller who landed at Jamaica a short time ago tells of a lady, a negress, dressed in silk and crinoline (she had come for the washing of the ship), who offered him a rose, and said—"That's for love, dear!" At Sireenuggur, the visitor is regaled with tea, scented with rosewater, and thickened with ghee. Thus customs vary—at Trieste, violets; at Jamaica, roses; and at Sireenuggur, tea.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHOEVER has watched a family of English children on a holiday combined with a pic-nic, must be aware that there is nothing so exciting or elevating as the feelings produced by the authority for idleness; every one is on his or her best behaviour—amiability is the order of the day, until towards evening, when fatigue and human nature again begin to exert their sinister influences.

Bismillah felt particularly cheerful, and even jolly, if

the word can be applied to one who had somewhat of the tigress in her disposition; the old Tartar blood of the Timour would peep out now and then. She stepped into her boat one fine morning in July, as it lay moored to the quay opposite her house, having resolved to pass a few days on the Sireenuggur lake with her sister Zeenut, who also enjoyed a little fun occasionally. Two extra boats had been provided for the occasion, one for the express use of the menials attached to the kitchen, the other for the various retainers of the family. The tents were not left behind, since an attractive spot on the borders of the lake often invites the traveller to halt, which the absence of tents would prevent his doing. Deoti accompanied Bismillah and Zeenut; the purdahs of the boat were carefully drawn down, and it moved up the stream against a tolerably strong current, which forced the eight rowers attached to the boat to throw themselves well forward, and put their whole strength into the stroke;—this was particularly necessary as the boat passed under the arches of the various bridges which connect the right and left banks of the river. The boatmen often shouted out “Oh saint! Oh saint!”—those on the rivers of the Punjab shout out “Oh Spirit of Bahawul Huk!”—the presiding saint of the shrine in the fort of Mooltan.

Opposite to the Sherghur, or palace occupied by the Maharaja, the boat took a sudden turn to the left, and shot into the Apple Canal. Houses were observable on both its banks; the powder magazine, an ill-constructed, ugly building, stands on the right bank.

After passing under a bridge a short distance beyond the powder magazine, Indad Ali observed an Englishman

fishing, a descendant of the illustrious man who banished slavery from the protection of the English flag. Unable to resist the tie which binds fellow-sportsmen together, he called out—"What sport, your highness?"

The Englishman held up three or four trout, which his boatman had strung on a willow twig.

After leaving the bridge, houses are more and more scarce. They are, however, to be seen almost hid by the trees on the banks of the canal; vines, having climbed up poplar trees to the height of thirty or forty feet, hang their festoons over them; also weeping willows, with their pliant branches.

The throne of Solomon is always a conspicuous object on the right hand until close to the Drogjan floodgate; it is then opposite to the head of the boat. The turf on the right hand bank of the canal, coming down to the water's edge, gives a pleasing and finished aid to the landscape. We have none of the ugly banks observable in the passage up the Nile. The bank on the left hand is much higher, shutting out all view except that of portions of hills in the distance. This bank has been constructed to guard the lands of the lake against excessive inundation. Groves of fine chenar or plane trees ornament the right hand bank, a few that on the left. We also have fine poplars on either bank. The waters of the canal are as clear as crystal; the bends of the canal incline towards the right; a more than usually sharp turn brings us to the floodgates of the lake, which shut when the current is strong from the canal into the lake, and open when the rush of water is from the lake into the canal. A strong pull and we are inside the lake, having passed the Drog-

jan floodgate. The boat moved on in silence for a few minutes; all were impressed with the lovely scene before them. It was soon arranged that the Nishat Garden should be first visited; the boat therefore kept a straight course from the floodgate.

Bismillah could no longer refrain from expressing her admiration of the scene before her; she almost screamed out—"See what a lovely, what a beautiful lake!"

Deoti at once replied, with energy—"Oh, princess! call it not a lake; say rather that it is a loved one, which has enslaved both sun and moon!"

"And what building is that on the side of the mountain, and why there?" asked Zecnut.

"That is the Fairies' Hall, built there because the shores of the lake were in the time of the glorious Emperor Jehangeer so covered with gardens as not to have a vacant spot," said Deoti.

Bismillah now put the question—"And why was the Emperor Jehangeer so fond of Cashmere?"

Deoti answered with a blush—"The Emperor loved the forbidden goblet!"

Bismillah replied—"We should conceal the faults of an Emperor; he was tempted by the evil one; see, we have thousands of lotus-goblets—enough to intoxicate both young and old."

Bismillah told her beads with fervour. After a few minutes' silence, she exclaimed with astonishment—"What a wonderful sight we have here—fire and water combined; the water is literally lit up with lotus blossoms!"

The Floating Gardens were now on the left hand; they are reached by paths through the water, known

only to those who travel through their labyrinths; thousands of Rosamond's bowers are found amongst these gardens of the deep. The idea of these gardens is perhaps more attractive than their actual appearance; they are, however, very curious. It is not an unusual thing for a thief to walk off with his neighbour's garden during the night. Earth is deposited on platforms of wood, and a pole driven into the lake to fasten them to. The lotus beds are indeed an attractive sight; as far as the eye can reach it can trace nothing but the pink blossoms of this plant.

The view of the Royal Fountain, as seen nestled on the side of the mountain, was so engaging, as to induce our travellers to submit to the fatigue of walking to it. It lies beyond the Fairies' Hall, in the direction of the Nishat Garden.

The water of the Royal Fountain is carefully apportioned, so as to permit its passing over sheets of cut stone, by which it is separated into innumerable globules, which fall to the ground like a cloud of pearls.

There is a house attached to the fountain, with a court-yard; the whole is enclosed by a wall in tolerable repair. The watercourses of the fountain are, it is true, considerably out of repair, but the natural beauties of the spot are so great as to owe but little to artificial embellishment.

The sun was now tolerably hot; our party therefore wisely resolved to remain at the Royal Fountain until the cool of the evening. As Bismillah sat by the basin into which the waters of the fountain incessantly fall, she caught the sentiment which was expressed by the scene before her, and exclaimed somewhat mournfully—

“Hamīshah bar lab-i fauwārah, in sokhan jārist;
 Ki kār-i mansab-i dunyā-i dūn, nirgūn-sarast.”
 “The fountain always seems to say,
 This world is daily tending to decay.”

As the story runs—in days long since gone by, the Emperor Jehangeer and the lovely Empress Noor Jehan sat by this very fountain, enchanted and chained by the beauty of the spot; they heeded neither the rising nor the setting sun. At last, the Emperor slumbered; but sleep was banished from the eyes of the Empress by the incessant murmuring of the fountain. She therefore thus addressed it: “Why, oh fountain! are you always weeping and shedding tears,—what lover’s curls have caused your sorrow?”

Fountain.—“Oh Empress! why is sleep banished from your eyes,—why do you mournfully bend your head towards the earth?”

Empress.—“The waters of a fountain, rising, fall to mark their respect for the Emperor!—can I do less?”

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It was now evening; taking, therefore, a last farewell from the window of the House of the Royal Fountain, which commands one of the most superb views of the lake, the party moved off to their boats, and having made all snug, the rowers pulled towards the Nishat Garden. The boat with Bismillah in it stopped at the stairs which lead from the garden to the lake as the sun threw its last tints of evening over the valley; a few minutes more, and darkness clothed it in its sable mantle; yet a few minutes more, our travellers reached the high terrace at the end of the garden, shaded by some magnificent plane trees; there Indad Ali lit the watchfire.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHAT a bond of union a watchfire is to us in the East!—how we all gather round it, irrespective of religion, caste, or nationality. As the pine wood throws its genial warmth and light around, what discordant elements it brings to our notice: the solitary Englishman sits before it, far from old England, encircled with Asiatics from all parts of Hindoostan, amongst the wild beauties of the scenery of the Valley of Cashmere. It is thus the power of England is exhibited to the civilised world—it is her power which enables the Englishman to sit so calmly in the midst of barbaric races. A few years back, that old Sikh, who now carries his master's sword and revolver as a confidential servant, fought against us at Moodkee, Ferozeshah, Sobraon, Ramnugur, Chillianwala, and Goojerat. He tells his stories of the past as freely as any one; he is always grand on the death of Huree Sing in the famous fight with the Affghans in the Khyber. That old Jemadar, a Rajpoot, was one of our irregular cavalry: he was a mutineer in 1857, rendered some service to a British officer, and is now supported by him; he is not ashamed to tell his anecdotes of the rebellion. Then there are wild fellows from the Khyber; Swat men, regular cut-throats; Poorbeahs; Delhi men; in short, the most inveterate enemies sit round the watchfire, like so many tame cats. The Englishman who sat at the watchfire was DeLaré; he had mixed much with Natives during the rebellion, and had been able to render most essential

services to many of the most noble families in Delhi in their hour of need. When troops of women who boasted of the best blood of Hindoostan met him burnt by a September sun in 1859, with blistered feet and faint with hunger, DeLaré fed them, protected them, and sent them to a place of security. These acts of kindness and humanity were carried from mouth to mouth, and were freely discussed by the wild men who now gathered round the watchfire: "This Feringhee," said they, in a low whisper, "is no enemy of our race."

All official etiquette is laid aside when the Feringhee meets his rude followers around the watchfire; he will often hear home truths from rough men, but he must not mind them, but rather try to benefit by friendly advice. In one thing all men will agree, that the English Government is honest, and the English brave to a fault: "How can we hang back when we have such gallant leaders?" is a tribute of respect at once to silence the defamer of the Indian Army. Go into any village in Hindoostan, in the Punjab, in Nepal, in Huzara, in the Khyber; talk to the villagers without official pomposity, and you will hear honest praise of the Indian officer, worth more than all the lavish praise of partizanship in the House of Commons, and an answer in full to the party spleen of men envious of the bright halo which hangs around the heads of the officers of the late Company's Army.

Indad Ali soon spied out DeLaré, as he sat thoughtfully over his watchfire in the Nishat Garden, not far from the place where Bismillah was encamped; he accosted him with his usual grace and aptness, and said

—“The Princess will be pleased to see your highness, if you have a few moments to spare.”

DeLaré had met Bismillah more than once since his interview described in a former chapter; but he was sadly piqued at the figure he cut on that occasion. In subsequent conversation, he found that an English education does not at once impress an Oriental with extreme veneration for its possessor. An officer who can command an army, has been decorated, is a favoured son of fortune, can ride well, shoot well, is liberal and open-handed, at once attracts admiration. Not so the book-worm: he may be clever; but can he keep society together by his superior intelligence and force of character—can he ensure to the masses of society safety for life and property? We should never lose sight of the military element in the Government of India: a barrister is very well in a court of justice, but give us the fire and dash of the officer combined with the intelligence and capacity requisite for a ruler.

Whilst the barrister is grouping about for his wig, gown, and blue bag, the military ruler has put on his helmet, tightened the kumurbund of his chapkun, grasped his sword, charged at the head of his retainers, gained the day, re-established order,—but Buggins has lost his head!

“Ah, Cousin!” said Bismillah—“how strange to see you here alone: how you Englishmen do wander!”

“At all events, my being at the Nishat Garden has been the cause of an agreeable meeting for me,” answered DeLaré, in his best Hindustani.

“You are improving in your Oordoo,” remarked Bismillah, condescendingly, taking DeLaré’s hand; “but do not, pray, pronounce the word *mulakut* (meet-

ing) so queerly ;” and she mimicked DeLaré in the kindest way imaginable.

How disagreeable it is to be quizzed by a woman on our weak points !

“ Have you ever been to Ceylon ? ” asked Bismillah, after a pause of a few minutes.

“ Yes,” replied DeLaré.

“ And seen the temples built of gold ? ” quietly asked Bismillah.

DeLaré at once replied—“ It is a child’s fable ! ”

Bismillah laughed in DeLaré’s face, and again asked—“ I suppose, then, you have never climbed up the wall which bounds the world, and looks on interminable plains ? ”

“ No,” said DeLaré, quite vexed.

“ Then what have you seen ? ” said Bismillah. “ Perhaps you will tell me that the sun does not go round the earth, and that there are no men to be seen twelve yards high, with only one eye ? ”

“ My dear cousin,” said DeLaré, “ you have been incorrectly informed on these points ; after a few lessons from me, you will see with quite different eyes, and find that your education must commence anew.”

Bismillah, feeling that she might perhaps be wrong on some points, was determined to be the conqueror on one subject at least ; she therefore, with all the confidence of a good cause, took DeLaré’s hand, which she had dropped, and said impressively—“ You cannot deny that the Kampani Saheb Bahadoor was not an old woman living in Leadenhall Street ? ”

DeLaré replied smilingly—“ My dear Bismillah, you are quite right ! ”

Bismillah was delighted, and said to DeLaré,—“You see I am not quite so ignorant as you imagined; Hindustani ladies do know something now and then, although they do not dance, sing, and drink wine mixed with a little water! Good night, Cousin; our watchfire is nearly out!”

And thus the cousins parted.

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During the night, fearful shrieks were heard along the waters of the lake; the breeze which blew softly from Sircenuggur brought them nearer and nearer. Years ago, the Governor of Cashmcre, Meean Sing, ordered his wife to be destroyed by thrusting her into a bath of boiling water in the palace of Sherghur; the shrieks of the poor woman were dreadful to hear,—there was no concealment about the deed, all knew it. Meean Sing was subsequently killed in the same bath-room by his own soldiers. Who doubts the guiding hand of Providence? Deeds have been committed in the valley of Cashmere to even mention which humanity trembles.

DeLaré could not sleep: he thought of Bismillah, and of the want of education in India in general. Its people possess very great capabilities, and are apt scholars; but when the student, with some general ideas in advance of his time, returns to his family, the good seed which has been sown is too often checked, and in a few years all trace of education has disappeared. We must still go on: in perhaps fifty, eighty, or a hundred years, we shall have diffused good principles throughout Hindoostan—its inhabitants are deficient in principle and resolution.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SUNDER was a social institution of Delhi; she filled the same position in the capital of the east as Grisi in London, Rachel in Paris, and others in the capitals of the western world. In short, Sunder was a public singer and dancer. When the siege was at its height, Sunder vowed a brace of fat rams, with collars made of gold-mohurs, to the shrine of Huzarut Bal, at Sireenuggur, should the power of the British be re-established within a year, and mentally resolved to present her offering in person. Sunder was young, good-looking, and rich, and owned a comfortable house close to the Juma Musjid at Delhi; indeed she was envied by thousands in Delhi, having escaped being plundered through the good offices of one of the moonshees of the intelligence department, to whom she had assigned a few gold-mohurs for a loyal pass;—and was not Sunder loyal, having vowed two rams in the cause of the English? Sunder's family had for generations past carried on the profession of public singers;—it was its boast, that it had never wanted a woman to sing before an emperor. The class of singing women in Hindoostan belongs to a clan or caste: they are mostly Mahomedans; some few are Hindoos. Property descends in the female line, and there is always a recognised power of adoption. If a singer dies, her *nochis* or apprentices divide her property equally. Singers in Hindoostan have great influence on the political and religious feelings of the country: no cloud can gather without their knowledge on the political horizon; for they are constantly visiting the families of respectable people, both Hindoo and Mahomedan,

and become pretty well acquainted with their feelings on most subjects. As to religion, hardly a ceremony of importance can take place amongst Hindoos or Mahomedans without the aid of professional dancing and singing; this was the reason why Bismillah regarded DeLaré's singing and dancing with feelings of such strong aversion. Public singers have their clients all over the country, and on all important occasions, the services of a singer are secured by the payment of earnest-money. It is also stipulated whether the singer contracts for a certain sum of money for so many days or nights, or whether she attends under the agreement that she will receive what the guests choose to give.

Many of these singers, from their free intercourse with the world, are shrewd and clever. They are educated with great care, and taught all those blandishments of set speeches and gesture which render them so attractive in Indian society. Deportment is commenced on at early years: how to move about the hands and feet, to advance, retreat before an audience; what songs should be sung, at what periods of the day, or at night; and what class of song should enchant the bumpkin, what the refined citizen or courtier, are all matters of deliberate care and forethought. Many of the songs of a refined Delhi singer are very poetical and stirring.

Sunder was bound for Cashmere. She passed through the Cashmere Gate at Delhi, through which the British column entered on the 14th September, 1857, early one morning in June. She rode in a rath drawn by two Nagore bullocks, with red cloth tied round their horns. The covering of the rath was of red cloth, and the trappings of the bullocks were made up with red cloth.

also. Each bullock had a circle of small bells round his neck. The driver of the bullocks sat in the front of the rath. Whatever servants Sunder possessed followed on foot. Two small boxes contained dancing apparel and jewels. Sunder's *nochi*, a little girl eight years old, sat opposite to her, looking on with childish pleasure and wonder; her name was Moti (pearl).

In former days, most of the slave-girls were imported from Cashmere; but since the ascendancy of the British, the trade has been checked. It was very brisk during the time of the Sikh rule. Rajpootana is probably the only territory in the vicinity of Delhi where this odious traffic still exists; the number of independent Rajpoot Chiefs, and the éclat there always is in marrying a wife who has so many slave-girls as her marriage-portion, tends to keep alive this barbarous custom. The trade in young female slave-girls requires the most active inquiries of the British Government; it is a dark National plague-spot.

Sunder sits in her rath, proud of her beauty, her wealth, and her resolution in setting out for Cashmere to fulfil a religious obligation.

"My child we are going to present the two rams with golden collars, which I vowed during the siege of Shah-jehanabad, to Huzarut Bal."

"Mother, do you love the Feringhees?" asked the child.

"Child, I love a strong government, under which every one feels secure."

"Mother, I hear you danced for nothing when Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of Hindoostan!—is that true?"

"It is, Moti; it is the duty of our family always to encourage loyalty. I danced for nothing, it is true; but now I am entered in the books of the kotwal of Delhi as the loyal Sunder, who danced gratis at the proclamation of Her most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria: this is an immense advantage to me—I have already made thousands of rupees by my gratuitous services!"

Upon this, Sunder produced an eight-anna stamp paper, with an official seal and signature, which ran as follows.

"ROORKAREE drawn up in the Court of the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, before POPKINS Sahib Bahadoor.—(May his lofty crest rise year by year! —Fakht.

"Be it known to all Men, that SUNDER, a Public Singer, is famed through the wide world for loyalty: she danced gratis on the 20th November, 1858, A.D., when Queen VICTORIA assumed the sovereignty of Hindoostan.

(Signed) "POPKINS,

"Deputy Commissioner.

"DELHI, December 1st, 1858."

Sunder folded up the precious document, having made her obeisance to it. "And Moti, what do you suppose this cost me?" asked Sunder.

"What, Mother?" inquired Moti,

"Sixteen rupees paid to the loyal chuprasse who daily puts a big bundle of papers before Popkins saheb, and sixteen rupees to the kotwal of Delhi: but we must pay for good men to govern the State!"

The bullocks jogged on to Bhimber, and Sunder arrived at the shrine of Huzarut Bal one fine morning in July, with Moti, and her two rams with their golden collars. How welcome she was; how the fakeers danced about her!—the high-priest hurried on his clothes, and offered to conduct the rams. The procession moved on from the border of the lake to the shrine, which is situated at only a short distance from its bank. Whilst Sunder was pondering over the avarice of mankind, amused with the cordial welcome of her rams, she heard a friendly voice exclaim,—“Who would have thought of seeing you at Cashmere?”—It was Indad Ali’s voice!”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE late Colonel Mackeson used to tell a story of an old Affghan, who exhibited undoubted signs of fear when caught in a storm in the turbulent waters of the Indus; when the boat landed its passengers, he would apologise for his want of pluck by saying it was no place for an old man. Thus the Nishat Garden was no place for a young girl who sought to retain her affections uninfluenced, and disengaged. Perhaps Bismillah cared not to retain what she wished to lose—her heart. After her watchfire meeting with DeLaré, she rose early. Her sleeping hours were with him; and as the clear clarion of the watchful cock told of the break of day, she called to her nurse and asked after DeLaré. But DeLaré was now well on his way to the hills above the

Shalimar Garden, in quest of a careless elk or venture-some bear. He had not, however, forgotten Bismillah: he left a nosegay, which he had gathered in haste, for her; the dew of morning was still fresh on the flowers as nurse Kareeman handed the gift to Bismillah. The dew-drops fell on Bismillah's dress: were they destined to foretell days of joy or sorrow? Bismillah examined the flowers with her brilliant eyes: whilst there were two or three blossoms of other flowers, there was only one forget-me-not. Bismillah at once detected the flower which had been pointed out to her at Bhimber as the messenger between the sexes of the Saxon race, and as she withdrew it carefully from the nosegay, she felt the blush mantle on her cheek. "A message, indeed," she said, "from an infidel to one of the race of Timour!" But then this Feringhee, infidel, was Bismillah's cousin! Must the voice of religion or the ties of blood prevail? Bismillah halted between two opinions,—the novelty of being loved and its charms, and the inbred scorn of the Christian sect, called on her for a decision: she would postpone it for a few days, and then decide. "And what did the saheb say," said Bismillah, "when he gave you the nosegay?"

"He gave his salaam," said Kareeman.

"Did he merely say 'salaam'?" asked Bismillah, picking a rose to pieces in her nervous attempt to conceal her interest.

"Well," replied Kareeman, "how odd that your highness should care what an infidel says! His highness speaks bad Oordoo, as you well know. As far as I could understand, the message he gave was this: 'Give this to your royal mistress, and tell her that

slaves desire to be released from their chains ; I wish to wear mine for ever ! ”

Bismillah bit her lip, and said, with a tremulous voice — “ I am told that the Feringhee believes treachery in love and war as allowable ! ”

Bismillah now turned her thoughts towards marriage: could she marry an infidel cousin? Now, in India, marriages are not arranged as in Europe. A gentleman of India who wants a wife cannot go on, as young men do in England, eating good dinners, drinking good wine, dancing with all the pretty girls in a county, in white kid gloves, and pocket-handkerchiefs scented with eau-de-cologne. England does not object to exhibit her young ladies to young men who want wives ; they may conquer either with a pliant tongue or a long purse. India objects to this custom : young ladies are shut up in a zenana, and, amongst Mahomedans, a barber sets out on behalf of a young lady’s family to get a husband for her. Woe to the barber who brings back a blind or a lame husband, unless he has plenty of money, which has its value in India as well as in England in the scale of matrimony.

Any one who knows India will have learnt the pleasure a marriage gives to our village communities. Notice a Jat marriage : all the men in red turbans, clean white dresses, many mounted on clever active country mares ; how they gallop, how they shake their bridles, shout, and agitate their legs ! The women amongst the Jats come out very smart on these occasions : they are a handsome race, wear dark blue and red petticoats, dark-coloured sheets thrown modestly over their heads, sparkling with pieces of looking-glass stitched to the chudder. What

a profusion of jewels! What would our farmers' wives in England say to them? Before the rebellion, gold and silver passed unchallenged through some of the wildest tracts of Hindoostan—"Was the Company's rule so bad?"

Bismillah wondered whether, if she married DeLaré, her cousin, he would agree to be dressed in Hindoostanee clothes; to be mounted on a prancing horse with dyed mane, tail and legs; to consent to a first-rate *barat* or marriage procession, with tom-toms, and a regiment of men dressed up after the Delhi fashion, as sham soldiers?—in short, would DeLaré sink the English for once, and take to the Natives? Then she thought of her own jewels, and boxes full of clothes: could DeLaré supply her wants to her heart's content? Then, if she did not marry DeLaré, whom could she marry, in the present fallen state of the house of Timour? Then she thought of poverty, and trembled. After all, DeLaré was a hakim; not very poor: her own cousin, but an infidel: but how rich was DeLaré? Bismillah called Indad Ali, and asked him the question—"What is His Highness DeLaré's pay?"

Indad Ali replied at once—"His Highness has just been appointed Commissioner of Delhi, on Rs. 2,750 a month; he also has a private fortune of one lakh of rupees."

Bismillah thought this very agreeable, as far as it went; and asked Indad Ali, with feigned carelessness, if he thought DeLaré could stand the expense of a *barat*.

Indad Ali was somewhat startled at the question, but replied—"His Highness DeLaré Saheb Bahadoor (may

he always prosper!) could at the present moment fill a zenana with an accomplished princess, and support her suitably to the rank of a Timour. Some of the princes of the house of Delhi, you are aware, lived on four rupees a month prior to the rebellion!"

Bismillah saw her way clearly to a *barat*; but then DeLaré was—an infidel. She strolled through the shaded walks of the Nishat Garden, and looked down on the lovely panorama of the lake, and the Isle of Gold. She wondered how the future would turn out. She gazed on the flower the special gift of DeLaré; a few drops, like pearls, fell from those brilliant eyes of fire, and again moistened it with morning dew.

The young girl sighed, and wished that DeLaré was a Moslem: then how spread with flowers her path would be; how she would be envied by the populace as she again entered Delhi, as the wife of its ruler. She seemed to have forgotten love, and again resumed her nature, as she stamped and said aloud—"Then I could revenge my slaughtered race!"

DeLaré had sent a nosegay to a young girl without intending any mischief, and had caught Bismillah in her own toils. He had polished up a sentence in Oordoo, as delivered by Kareeman—one of which the Punjab Government might be proud; even Blubber would applaud it, until he knew who composed it.

Whilst Bismillah was stamping on the ground, DeLaré was as merry as a lark, climbing the side of the mountain above the Shalimar Garden, hoping to breakfast close to the glacier from which Sircenuggur is supplied with ice; he hummed, as if mocking Bismillah and her forget-me-not—

“ ’Tis well to be merry and wise,
 ’Tis well to be honest and true;
’Tis well to be off with the old love,
 Before you are on with the new! ”

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHILST standing on the Silver Isle, with your face to the north, you will have the Shalimar Garden almost immediately in front of you; it is snugly situated at the entrance of a charming valley, which appears to be guarded by two ranges of mountains, which have, however, left sufficient space between them for this chosen theme of the poet. The Nishat Garden, as we now stand, is more to the right—it is there we have left our heroine: the sides of the mountain are there steeper than the ground on which the Shalimar Garden is built. The general character of the two gardens is the same: summer-houses, erected on elevated terraces, past which the stream from the mountain flows in artificial channels. It, however, sometimes is detained in handsome reservoirs faced with stone, to mount up again to the heavens in graceful fountains. The present ruler of Cashmere has lately repaired these summer-houses, in a modern style of architecture: give us the wild beauty of nature and the fallen column. The *chenar* trees, now old, venerable, and many of them decayed, are the chief attractions of these gardens; they were planted by the Emperors of Delhi. To the left we have the

Naseen Garden, or the "Garden of Sweet Breczes." It is on the same side of the lake as the shrine of Huzarut Bal, where we left Sunder, Moti, and Indad Ali. There are no buildings in the Naseen Garden, which consists of rows of magnificent plane trees—about twelve hundred; many of them have attained a girth of twenty-six feet: they have now been planted for upwards of two hundred years. The great beauty of the lake of Sireenuggur consists in the absence of all formality; the numerous landscapes, which attract the eye in every direction, all possess a fresh charm of form or colour—nothing partakes of sameness.

Whilst Bismillah, after passing the Drogjan Gate, kept close to the mountains on the right, Sunder, by skirting the suburbs on the left, and passing many romantic-looking houses, reached the shrine of Huzarut Bal; she then passed under two bridges, those of Zugée Lunker and Nyliar. Between the two bridges, on the right hand side, a company of blind calinders vociferously demanded charity. The fort of Hurce Purbut, or Hari Parbat, was thus on the left. This fortress derives its name from a hari or mina, which in days long past brought the rock on which the fort is built in its beak, and, dropping it in its present position, stopped up the entrance of a cave, in which an evil spirit had taken refuge, and who persisted in eating up the good folks of Cashmere. As Sunder passed the fort, the Tower of Dara Shekoo was pointed out to her, and she sang the amusing verse which had been made regarding it, for Moti's amusement. ("Syfkhan sits impudently on the Tower of Dara. This problem is well known: the dog sits in the cook's place!")

“Syfkhan, as governor of the valley of Cashmere, oppressed its people.” The newswriter of the imperial reign thus briefly reported the governor’s impudence and arrogance.

Indad Ali and Sunder, after asking about mutual friends, agreed that a few songs would cheer up Bismillah; the following day was accordingly fixed on for a meeting at the Shalimar Garden. Swell parties in London invite their opera singers to private parties on fixed salaries, and Native ladies in Hindoostan are, curiously enough, fond of the same excitement in the seclusion of the zenana. Sunder entered her boat, and rowed off for Sireenuggur, minus her rams and golden collars, and plus her aversion for men who, under the garb of religion, are eaten up with avarice and sloth. Hindoo temples and Mahomedan shrines are a cause of the greatest scandal to honest pilgrims, who cannot but see with what eye they are viewed at these holy places. The Silver Isle was the scene of a very amusing anecdote, which took place about twenty years ago. The Governor, Dewar Kirpuran, was feasting there with the choice spirits of Sireenuggur; fireworks were playing, cannon were roaring, and dancing women were screaming, when in walked the usher of the silver rod of Maharaja Runjeet Sing, with a tap on the shoulder for the Dewan, recalling him. He started at once, turned fakeer, and eventually, we believe, died as a mendicant at the holy city of Benares. To see the lake in all its perfection of Native holiday attire, it should be visited on the day of the annual feast of Huzarut Bal. Thousands of boats are pulled to the shrine, row before it for

half an hour or so, until the hour of prayer; then the syud exhibits hairs of the prophet's beard, enclosed in a glass bottle, passing along on the shoulders of the crowd, which is well pressed together. When prayers are over, the rush is to the Silver Isle, and on to the Shalimar Garden; then to the Tel-Bal Canal, so cool, pleasant, and refreshing. What a quantity of tea is made; what mountains of rice disappear! When evening draws on apace, the rush is back to the shrine: boat races with boat, the boatmen shout manfully, and men and women howl and scream. The feast of Huzarut Bal is the Derby day of a Cashmere gentleman; who would slight Huzarut Bal and expect to prosper? Tea and rice have charms for Cashmere men and women unknown to us barbaric Feringhees.

As Bismillah gazed on the ashes of the watchfire, she thought of DeLaré. Are not ashes emblematic of our blighted existence—once so happy, so gay, so cheerful; how soon shall we be forced to mourn over the past, to struggle against the present, and long for the future! It was a relief to Bismillah when she was summoned by Zeenut to enter her boat and row on to the Shalimar Garden; the fresh air on the lake seemed to invigorate her; she shook off her melancholy: why should she be unhappy—so young, so beautiful? Let sorrow entrap the aged, but not the young; they should revel in green fields, and be ready to gather the early flowers of spring: we leave the orange, red, scarlet, russet-brown, and yellow tints of autumn to the aged, to those who have passed through life—we are just commencing it. Our songster sings cheerily and merrily amongst the branches

of the lofty chenar tree; we are not yet frozen, impoverished, hungry; forced to ruffle our plumage, and constrained to beg our bread at the window of an English house, like the starved robin.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SUNDER was punctual to her engagement, and her boat passed up the canal which separates the Shalimar Garden from the lake just as the sun was setting; the hills to the right and the left of the Royal Fountain were tinted with the most enchanting rose colour, whilst the sun disappeared gradually behind the towering peaks of the Peer Pinjal Range. Even Moti was struck with the soft splendour of the colouring as she withdrew her hand from her childish attempt to press her face as close as possible to its reflection in the clear water of the lake.

“Mother,” said the child, “we do not see such sights at Delhi!”

Indad Ali was ready to receive Sunder, and escorted her to one of the snug summer-houses with which the garden abounded. It was arranged that she should appear before the princesses as soon as everything was quiet, and it was certain that the garden would be free from intruders for the evening, especially Feringhees, who were much dreaded. Sunder was to sing in the open verandah of the hall at the further end of the garden, of which the black polished marble pillars are amongst the most attractive objects in this enchanting

retreat. It was arranged that Bismillah and Zeenut should sit in the inner room of the hall, screened by a purdah.

Sunder appeared in a dress of crimson silk, made with a high waist, which reached to a short distance below her knees; the skirt was made very full, and richly ornamented with gold lace, the work of a noted Delhi embroiderer. Her trousers were very wide, of pink silk, ornamented with silver embroidery. A scarf was thrown over the dancer's right and left shoulders, but not over her head; it was of white muslin, with a border of gold lace. Sunder wore earrings, and bangles on her feet, which she was fond of striking together to the time of the music; she also had rings on her hands in profusion, and on her toes—one of the rings contained a piece of looking-glass in it. Her hair was drawn well back, and plaited into a pig-tail, which hung down to her waist: two love-curls were, however, left free, and were very carefully arranged. Sunder's hair was as black as a raven's wing, and of a most luxuriant growth.

As became a celebrated professional of Delhi, Sunder kept her own musicians, four in number: two played the guitar, one a kind of drum, which is struck with the hand and fingers to bring out its sounds; and the fourth played the castanets.

All was now ready; Sunder was well stored with thoomries, tuppas, khyals, dhoorputs, rykhtas, and ghazals—different sorts of songs, well known at Delhi and in its vicinity. ♦

The music struck up: Sunder for a time danced—advancing, receding, and making great use of her chud-

der in her varied graceful movements. She seemed very proud of the elastic pliancy of her hands and fingers. After preluding for a short time, to try her voice, the songstress of Delhi commenced with the well-known touching words—

“My heart’s so full of care,
I cannot think of love :
Tell me why,
My lover?”

She then changed her words for the song of—

“I went to the well for water ;
There I broke my pitcher.”

Again Sunder threw all the force of her charming voice into the words—

“Why did you call me back—
Was it to treat me thus unkindly?
What has been gained—
Surely a broken heart?”

Again—

“We will sleep under the cypress,
And wake to the tune of the bulbul [nightingale].”

But we have no space for all the pretty songs which Sunder sang before Bismillah and Zeenut in the Garden of Shalimar: we must, however, mention one couplet, which was artfully arranged to please Bismillah and Zeenut—in fact, Sunder had composed it herself; it may be rendered thus, and was in praise of the mild rule of the Emperors of Delhi over the valley of Cashmere:—“Through the justice of the king the land is so flourishing that the vines are forced to cling to the trees. In short, there is no other vacant space for them in the valley.”

Sunder's imitation of a snake-charmer, in which performance she made use of the end of her chudder to represent a pipe, was loudly applauded, as also her exhibition of her skill as a kite-flyer: her personal appearance was most improved by her wearing a nicely worked cap of gold embroidery.

But all performance must have an end, and Bismillah hung a garland of roses round the singer's neck as she knelt before her, having been admitted into the inner room in which the two princesses were seated behind the purdah. Sunder was highly elated at this mark of royal favour, and made the appropriate speech—"One of the house of Timour can always reward its slaves."

Sunder and Moti were now asked to sit down on a carpet not far from that on which the two princesses were seated. Bismillah naturally asked Sunder how she liked Cashmere. Her reply was—"Oh princess! the valley is indeed lovely, but I feel a stranger in it, parted from my own dear Delhi!"

"Are you then so fond of Delhi?" asked Bismillah.

"Princess, I am: is not Shahjehanabad, even in its fallen state, the Empress of Hindoostan? Are not you the descendant of a royal line? Where is your home?—Delhi!"

Sunder was more than a match for Bismillah in conversation; the latter spoke from the heart, but the singer was artificial. If Sunder could have at that moment been transported into the presence of the Governor-General of India, she would have been quite at home,—she would have complimented his lordship on his bravery, and the success of his arms, through which the poor people of Hindoostan were able to sit

quietly under the shadow of the banner of England. But Sunder was a loyal girl: had she not vowed two rams with golden collars to the Shrine of Huzarut Bal at Cashmere?

It was now growing late, and Sunder wished both the princesses good-bye in a most impressive manner. She started next day for Delhi, and there she may be seen if any one is willing to pay her for singing—the money will be well laid out.

The Natives of India are very clever with their tongues—cleverer than we English. We, however, labour under this great disadvantage—we are foreigners, speaking a strange tongue. Oratory is, however, not sufficiently attended to amongst us; we, perhaps, act more than we speak, when we have made up our minds on a subject. When there is a despotic government, the man who has the most facile and persuasive tongue gets on the best. The character of the Indian Government makes its inhabitants good talkers; it is their strong point. The same characteristic is strongly marked in the history of the Greeks: amongst them a man was forced to speak well if he wished to excel. We English trust more to the sword than the tongue; the pen we can use pretty well. Natives assert, perhaps somewhat unmercifully, that we are as false with our pens as with our tongues; but men proverbially false are prone to suspect their superiors. These are corner sentiments—they seldom reach the ear of the august Sahiban Ali Shan.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE passage of the Sikh army across the Sutlej, prior to the first Sikh war, cost the court of Lahore two millions of money, or two crores of rupees, in the first instance, and subsequently led to the break up of the kingdom of the Punjab, which owed its existence as a separate and independent state to the vigour and ability of Maharaja Runjeet Singh. The fine of two crores of rupees is politely styled, after the old Mahomedan phraseology, an item charged for the expense of horse-shoes for the English army ! Whilst the name of one state disappeared, its fall led to the formation of the Jumoo State—not designedly, but in consequence of the consummate tact displayed by Maharaja Goolab Singh. The politics of those days were the following : the Lahore treasury was found to be almost empty after the termination of the first Sikh war ; constant largesses to a turbulent, rapacious, and extortionate soldiery, had expended the treasure accumulated by the avarice of Runjeet Singh, with the exception of about fifty lakhs of rupees. The sum to be provided for by the treaty of the 9th of March, 1846, was two crores of rupees. The Jullundur Doab was assigned to the British Government in lieu of fifty lakhs of rupees, but there still remained the difficulty of providing for the payment of one crore. Maharaja Goolab Singh proposed that the several Sirdars of the Punjab who were personally interested in the maintenance of the state in its integrity should subscribe the balance of one crore, which was still due, amongst themselves. A court intrigue, however, pre-

vented the realisation of this scheme. It was the wish of the queen-mother that Lal Singh should be vizier, and it was evident that Maharaja Goolab Singh was bidding high for the post; it therefore became an object of the court to get rid of Maharaja Goolab Singh and his pretensions. Overtures were accordingly made to the British Government to accept Cashmere, and other territories in the hills, including Jumoo, in lieu of one crore of rupees. In fact, the intrigue left Goolab Singh, who was a feudatory of the Lahore court, without any country which he could call his own. The offer was accepted by the British Government; but political motives, whether short-sighted or not we are not prepared to argue at present, prompted our political officers to fall in with the views of Maharaja Goolab Singh, and to part with a territory, of which we never obtained corporal possession, to Goolab Singh, for the sum of seventy-five lakhs of rupees. Consequently, Goolab Singh's existence as an independent sovereign, in alliance with the British Government, dated from the 16th March, 1846. There are a few stipulations of the treaty which we shall mention: the frontiers of the Jumoo territory cannot be extended without the permission of the British Government; all disputes between the court of Jumoo and those of other states must be referred to British arbitration; we are bound to protect the state from external attacks, whilst the Jumoo court must assist the British Government with its army when called upon to do so. There were numerous complaints when Goolab Singh took possession of Cashmere, and for some time after, which led to subsequent sub-treaties; but more of them hereafter, if necessary.

Bismillah felt an unusual depression of spirits, although she had the luxurious garden of Shalimar to wander about in. Perhaps its beauty was one of the causes which enfeebled her mind; she appeared not to take her usual delight in the bright flowers of the lake, the lily of the sun, that of the moon, or the beds of lotus blossoms; neither did the pure fresh air of the lake appear to invigorate her—it was either too hot or too cold. The gift of the solitary forget-me-not had been too much for our heroine's unsophistical, simple heart; she was proud and imperious, but totally ignorant of the ways of the world. From wondering why DeLaré had sent her the forget-me-not, she passed on imperceptibly to adding up the *pros* and *cons* in the scale of matrimony: DeLaré was young—in his favour: he was rather dark—by no means against him; he was a soldier, and brave—very much in his favour; he was her own cousin—favourable; he was a hakim—good; he was rich—very good; he was a Feringhee—Timour was a foreigner; DeLaré was an infidel,—here Bismillah paused, and determined to ask advice: how could she know much about such matters, she thought.

In a short time, Bismillah gained sufficient confidence to ask Zeenut whether she did not think the time had arrived for her being married. Her sister was rather startled at the question, but said nothing which could alarm Bismillah, and replied,—“Dear sister, the prospects of the Royal Family of Delhi are at present not very good; I fear I shall have a good deal of trouble in providing you with a suitable husband!”

Bismillah now incautiously made a remark regarding

DeLaré, which disclosed that she was not indifferent towards him.

Zeenut shortly after sent for Indad Ali, and opened the subject to him as she sat in one of the summer-houses of the garden: "Indad Ali, you are a faithful servant of our family: in the absence of the barber, to whom our secrets are confided, we cannot entrust an important duty to any one more qualified than yourself. With due circumspection and address, you must provide a husband for Bismillah!"

Indad Ali bowed to the earth, and declared his devotion to the royal house of Delhi. He then immediately walked up to the seat on which Bismillah was reclining somewhat listlessly, and said—"Princess! His Highness DeLaré has been absent for some days; he will probably relish a present of fruit, tea, sugar, and a letter accompanying the gift."

Bismillah started, but said quickly—"Yes, send a present and a letter by all means; bring the letter to me, and I will seal it."

Indad Ali seated himself in a snug corner, under the shade of a lofty chenar, which had been planted by the Emperor Akbar, and at a signal a Cashmire boy brought him his bundle containing pens, ink, and paper: he untied it, and selecting a sheet of paper studded with gold, wrote in a clear hand the following epistle:—

The Princess BISMILLAH, to His Highness Captain

CHARLES ORLANDO DELARE.

"After compliments,—Be it known to our dear cousin, that we feel concerned for his welfare, not having heard

of him for some days; we therefore send a small present, which we trust will be acceptable. Why do you wander amongst the hills in search of wild beasts, when there is such pleasant fishing in the valley? Indad Ali, whom you know, could always attend you; he is an excellent sportsman. When shall we see you again?"

The letter was read to Bismillah. She at once approved of it, and set her seal to it. Indad Ali resolved to take the present and letter in person, which was always better, he said, than entrusting commissions to strangers.

He found DeLaré very tired, and out of humour. He had had no sport, and, what was worse, had almost been starved, for the last two days, on little else than iced water. DeLaré's servants had missed their way and their master. Indad Ali placed the presents sent to DeLaré on the ground, made his most finished obeisance, and placed the royal letter with great ceremony in his hand. DeLaré was charmed by the composition, and as his eye fell on all the good things sent by Bismillah, he felt quite grateful, particularly so when he became aware of the presence of a good meat pie, made after the English fashion, amongst the gifts.

He set to work at once, exclaiming—"Bismillah should have an English husband; she is a first-rate girl!"

Indad Ali was in capital spirits, and the evening passed pleasantly away, notwithstanding the cold. He was dismissed next morning with an appropriate reply, and the promise that he would be in Sirecnuggur in a few days. As soon as Indad Ali descended the hill, he

recounted to Zeenut and Bismillah what had taken place, and declared he believed that if Bismillah's present had not reached DeLaré, he would have been half starved. When alone, he fell into a train of thought, which, if not deeply philosophical, was certainly one of practical observation—that the human as well as the brute creation can be turned by hunger!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE house fixed on for Major Elphinstone's residence whilst on duty at Sircenuggur deserves some notice from us, as it is a lion in its way. The Shaikh Garden is on the right bank of the river Jhelum, above the palace of Sheergurh, but below the bungalows occupied by British officers when on leave at Cashmere. This garden, so charming in every respect, was originally laid out by Shaikh Moyadeen, the father of Shaikh Imamooddeen, who was the Governor of the valley when it was made over to the Dogra rule. The father is buried on the Huri Purbut or Sircenuggur citadel; the son died at Jullundur about two years and a half ago—his end having been hastened by his fondness for strong drinks. There is a double-storied house in the centre of the garden, built, after the fashion of Hindoostan, as a *baraduri*, or house with twelve doors, three on each side of a square. A chenar tree has been planted, in true Cashmere style, at each corner of the house; they are now about twenty years old, and are a graceful ornament to this building, to which they afford a most grateful

shade in the sultry days of summer. The grounds of the garden are intersected by paths, covered with turf, which intersect each other at right angles, being quite eastern as to the style in which they are laid out. Trees are planted along the sides of these paths, so as to secure perfectly shady spots in this lovely garden at all times of the day. When a traveller leaves his boat, reflected brightly in the clear stream of the Jhelum, and ascends a flight of steps, which are by no means worthy of the garden, he finds a row of poplars on the banks of the river; but a few steps bring him to a gateway, which leads into the garden. It also is approached by steps, which are raised so as to guard against the periodical risings of the river. As the traveller passes through the gateway, and looks to the left, he will see an avenue of fruit-trees and lilacs, and at the extreme left he will distinguish the tombs of the British officers who have died at or about Sireenuggur—amongst them Colonel Fullerton, of H. M.'s 9th Lancers, who died from excessive fatigue in crossing the Peer Pinjal range. Passing on, we have a very pretty shady grove of quinces, planted at regular distances—they are on our left hand; then we find a charming avenue of cherry, apple, and pear trees. Crossing the road by which we are advancing, we can look up and down it with the greatest pleasure, and think of England. This was Major Elphinstone's favourite walk during his stay at Sireenuggur. A pear tree, which had been bent almost to the ground, formed a comfortable seat. The rays of the sun never penetrated to this choice retreat. As the garden was entered on the river side by a gateway, so on its opposite side another gate led into it from a common which ran up to

the far-famed poplar avenue, a legacy of the Pathan rule. The requisite out-offices for servants, together with two small houses for visitors, were located in the garden towards the side nearest the Pathan avenue. In short, nothing could be more delightful than this truly luxurious and oriental garden, well stocked with fruit trees: when they are in bloom, thousands visit the place, and even spend the day there, feasting their eyes upon a flowery canopy of unequalled delicacy as to colour and texture. It having been represented to one of the Delhi Emperors that the orchards of Cashmere were worthy of His Majesty's notice, he gave an order that the trees of the Shalimar Garden should wait for his royal presence before they presumed to blossom with the genial season of spring! The cunning Governor of the valley, aware that to disobey a royal mandate was to lose his head, at once brought down thousands of loads of ice from the glacier above the garden, and placed them around the roots of the trees. Thus the Mogul Emperors insisted on their orders being obeyed.

Major Elphinstone had become very restless since he had met Sir Lionel, and resolved on visiting England in the cold season. India was now no longer what it had been to him—his home; he longed for England. Cashmere reminded him of his native land, and he loved it on that account. The fruit on the cherry-trees, the rosy apples, many pink throughout, the luscious pears—all made him think of his boyish days, when he was urged to choose a profession, and fixed upon the prospect of a bright career and happy days in India as an honourable course for him to run. What had the future brought? Hardly independence! But the tide had set

in strongly against a service of which he had always been justly proud : its officers, who had won India, were now proclaimed incompetent, after having been praised up to the skies during the war in the Crimea ! Clive commanded Europeans, and no one in those days found him incompetent : the 39th foot could tell us something about Indian officers, could the old slumberers arise from their honourable graves.

As Major Elphinstone walked up and down his favourite avenue, he always was perplexed with the choice : general service and poverty ; local service—neglect and favouritism ; staff service—doubt and perplexity ! He thought of the many men who had visited Cashmere—many of his own service,—Foster, Vigne, Moorcroft, Tribeck, Guthrie, Henderson, Lawrence, Mackeson, Hodson, Nicholson : what a crowd of historical recollections of modern date at once forced themselves on him ! Moorcroft, Tribeck, and Guthrie call forth our sympathy when we read of their melancholy end, enshrouded with gloom ; Lawrence's memory will shine brightly for ages around the citadel of Lucknow ; Mackeson's tomb calls forth the tear of the fierce Khyberce—familiar with danger, he dared to ride through the Khyber Pass alone, or almost so ; Hodson's tomb at Lucknow, and Nicholson's at Delhi, shame the attacks of the base slanderers of the Indian army. Hodson's star was low when the rebellion broke out—day by day it was destined to rise higher, to shine brighter and brighter ; a beacon to guide even his enemies to honour and glory : if they imitate his noble deeds, they will perhaps avoid some of his errors. The Punjab Government had nearly lost Nicholson before

the rebellion broke out; Lawrence had already quitted it in sorrow; Hodson met with his sorrows in the Punjab, but there his revenge was ample. Mackeson could hardly hold his own against the little men of the Punjab, who worried him in the sunny days of peace. When the clouds gathered, and the political horizon looked dark and uncertain, then little palpitating hearts called aloud for Mackeson. On one of these occasions, during the second Sikh war, Lord Gough, the Commander-in-Chief, was in need of some information regarding the enemy's position, which was separated from us by one of the Punjab rivers. The wish was expressed, and next day repeated. Mackeson quietly gave the information called for: he had gone down to the river during the night, tied his horse to a tree, swam the stream, and gained the necessary knowledge.

Major Elphinstone had many pleasant breakfasts under the trees in the garden, in which Mr. and Mrs. Poppy and Mr. and Mrs. Popkins joined; also Sir Lionel—but it went against his English ideas commencing the day so early. How pleasantly we Indians used to meet in easy sociable ways, under the shadow of the old Company, in the cool of the morning, when all our hopes were bright and cheering,—hope was our constant attendant! How much we made of those ladies who were doomed to pass their lives in exile with us—how they were always humoured in every way! But now ladies may dress and sigh: the bearer hardly ever has the welcome words on his lips—"A gentleman wishes for admittance;" the reply as seldom called for "Let him in at once, Peer Buksh!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WE are told by the Grecian historian—whether truly or not we hardly venture to inquire in these days of historical scepticism,—that when Perdikkas had murdered Philip of Macedon, he would probably have escaped, had he not been tripped up by the branches of a vine when trying to make good his retreat. Trivial circumstances produce important results too often but little dreamt of; and thus it was with DeLaré, as with many Englishmen who have a weakness in favour of good living. A kindly and timely tribute paid to the wants of the inner man, in a solitary spot by the side of a glacier, made DeLaré consider that Bismillah was a good, far-seeing housekeeper. From meditating over her qualities, the person of the housekeeper herself shone forth more attractively—shrouded, it is true, by an occasional spasm, when his fall as a judge crossed DeLaré's path. To hear bad English spoken by a Frenchman is bad enough, and Natives must suffer a good deal of agony from hearing their pure Oordoo murdered by their foreign rulers. However, it is a consolation to us to know that most great men have their weak points. After DeLaré's return from the glacier, he frequently met with Bismillah—in fact, he sought her society. Having exhibited our hero and heroine to the public now and then, we do not feel timid at any starting back at finding the graceful oriental princess associated with our Punjab official. A young lady with

bare feet, and a ring or so on her toes, is perhaps, not more formidable than an Englishman soiling a lady's fine brilliant-coloured Turkey carpet with dirty boots; the graceful folds of a native lady's attire are perhaps not more unclassical than stiff hoops and petticoats. An English lady now and then tinges her cheeks with rouge; a Native lady revels in hands and feet dyed with henna. Bismillah certainly improved in DeLaré's society; picked up a little English, and always said, "Good morning, Cousin!"—"Tank you!"—"You big man very great weight in the state!" When Bismillah talked English, DeLaré always felt a glow of satisfaction, until cooled by some well-aimed shaft as to the criminality of bad Oordoo being spoken by a judge. Thus the time passed pleasantly enough; and a row on the river Jhelum in the cool of the evening always concluded a day agreeably.

DeLaré became, as it were, essential to Bismillah's comfort, and Bismillah was always floating about in DeLaré's speculations for the future. Could he marry his cousin or not? What would the Punjab Government say? But DeLaré had one stronghold to which he often fled when in perplexity—he was not far from a peerage, and a large fortune!

A woman is the first to discover a woman's secret—never the first to conceal it; consequently, Deoti and Kareeman soon discovered that to praise DeLaré was the high road to their mistress' favour. His beauty was much extolled: Kareeman compared his walk to that of a young elephant! Deoti remarked that his eyebrows exceeded in their curve of beauty the lines of the best

boat on the waters of the Jhelum; she also asserted that his sweet savour had spread itself over the valley of Cashmere, like the perfume of the roses of spring!

Bismillah's ear had become so enervated with English flattery, that it now declared that DeLaré's accent was approaching close to that of the palace, and that his idiom was fast improving.

Indad Ali was always on the wing with messages, *dalis*, inquiries, and congratulations. Bismillah could have wished that DeLaré understood Indian etiquette as to marriage; but then the English never like foreign habits—they have the perversity of preserving their nationality in whatever country they may locate themselves. Frenchified or Hindooised Englishmen are not much thought of. Bismillah had found out a few English peculiarities from DeLaré. She wondered when she was told that English young ladies never talk even of marriage; they always shut their eyes until the moment for a proposal arrives—like so many bats; they then open them very wide, having never for a moment supposed that Mr. Flattery was “paying attention.” All this seemed very absurd to Bismillah, who declared that an approaching marriage was a thing to be thoroughly discussed, sifted, and ventilated. Bismillah often asked DeLaré what a marriage in England cost. “About £10,” replied DeLaré, “will enable a respectable man to marry.”

“Then how foolish you English in India are, not to be married,” replied Bismillah, “when you are all so rich!”

Now Mrs. Popkins was of this opinion: she had a sister in England who was expected at Calcutta at the

end of the year, and DeLaré was the husband fixed on by Mrs. Popkins for her. DeLaré had never, it is true, been consulted in the matter; but Mrs. Popkins knew the full weight of personal attractions in bringing about what Lord Ellenborough used to call an Adam-and-Eve marriage; in other words, where a bachelor and an unmarried lady are thrown together in a jungle station, they always marry. But Bismillah was a sharp thorn in Mrs. Popkins's side, and she hardly knew how to get rid of her; for she knew Bismillah was DeLaré's cousin. DeLaré seldom went into society, but when he met Mrs. Popkins, she always found him charming: indeed, men who avoid society are always popular with ladies when they are unearthed—perhaps for the reason that their conversation is fresher than that of the ball-room hackney, and a compliment, if paid, is fresh and original. The lady who drags forth a recluse soon feels a pleasure in inhaling the perfume of the flower of the tree which she has planted.

When a lady resolves to effect any specific object, trust her for ability to carry out her scheme. Mrs. Popkins proposed to DeLaré to pay a visit to his dear cousin. DeLaré made no objection, and on the evening of a fine summer's day Mrs. Popkins's flying boat pulled up at the stairs of the house occupied by Zeenut Begum and her sister Bismillah. Mrs. Poppy accompanied her friend, who flattered herself that she should gain enough gossip from the visit, which, by being skilfully darted at DeLaré, would make him feel ashamed of his cousin and her oriental ways. As soon as the two English ladies were conducted, with considerable ceremony, into the presence of the two Indian princesses, they felt that

quiet awe which rank always commands; but they were quite dazzled with the beauty of Bismillah. A mere girl, she met her visitors with the most perfect grace of manner, and made them feel quite awkward at not being able to return one of her many well-timed and well-tuned compliments.

The two ladies at once felt the false position they were placed in, from not being able to talk a foreign language purely, grammatically, or idiomatically; they quite blushed at the mistakes they were conscious of making: but it is not surprising that our fair countrywomen should fail in the purity of their idiom, when they generally pick up their Oordoo from their ayahs, who speak their own language worse than our peasant-girls do at home. Bismillah at once detected that Mrs. Popkins was very pretty, and that Mrs. Poppy was also very good-looking; but never having seen a lady with red hair, she thought,—“How prejudiced the English are against our race, when a Secretary makes his wife dye her hair as a sign that she is a Crusader!”

“I am indeed much honoured by your visit,” said Bismillah, modestly; “but English ladies are always as polite and engaging as their countrymen are brave and noble!” After a pause, Bismillah asked the two ladies whether they had ever been to court? Alas! they had never attended a drawing-room. Bismillah next inquired as to the position held in England by Popkins and Poppy, and ventured to hint that they were probably pillars of the state, possessed of immense wealth and influence. Alas! alas!—Mrs. Popkins managed to make out that Popkins’s papa was a landed proprietor; but what could Mrs. Poppy say? She spoke the truth,

like an Englishwoman—somewhat unwillingly, it is true,—but admitted the fact that Poppy's papa kept a paper-mill!

Bismillah was somewhat surprised, but said nothing to annoy her visitors, remarking—"How good it is of the English nation to take such an interest in the poor people of India, and to send out their Amcers to so poor and hot a country!"

The two ladies departed in sorrow. We forget, in our intercourse with the people of Hindoostan, that we are foreigners, and judged of by standards different from our own, by a race sensitive to a morbid degree as to pedigree and birth.

Bismillah was silent for some moments after the departure of her guests, and then said, somewhat sadly—"The English will always prosper—a woman dares to speak the truth: a Secretary's wife is not afraid to tell a princess that her father keeps a paper-mill! Where is the jewel truth so prized as in England!"

CHAPTER XL.

ALL Anglo-Indians of the old school are sociable, easy in their manners, and less artificial than your royal fresh from England. Sir James Outram has aptly marked this characteristic in his manly and brotherly defence of the Indian army. Major Elphinstone, following the bent of his disposition, resolved to give a picnic

for a week or so, to enable the Popkins and Poppy party, together with Sir Lionel, to see some of the attractive spots of the valley of Cashmere. Of course the society of two ladies had its full weight in the scale of decision. The party had been made up for the inspection of part of the valley below Sireenuggur; for although Bismillah came up the valley from Baramulla *via* Sopur, the rain prevented any description of it above Sopur. Captain Mull Aziz, a well-known character of Sireenuggur, drew up his barge, or *chakwarree*, opposite to the quay of the Shaikh Garden, precisely at 4 P.M. on the 20th September, 1860. The captain is a fine, tall, handsome man, with a black beard, and large white turban, and has a mind stored with all the gossip of the valley. The barge was originally built by Shaikh Imamooddeen, the Governor of the valley. It is propelled by forty rowers, and has a room in the centre, with an arched roof; it is well protected by coloured purdahs, and is capable of comfortably accommodating eight or ten people. Our party soon embarked. Two sleeping boats were provided for Poppy and Popkins, rowed by six men each; a cooking boat, also, was hired by Major Elphinstone. As the boat darted past the Palace of Sheerghur, the guard at its gate rushed out and presented arms; a little further on, the Maharaja was seen in one of the verandas of the palace, enjoying the cool evening air. All the English party saluted him: his highness returned the compliment in the most gracious manner. As the boat passed down the stream, the principal men of the city salaamed, sitting in their elegantly carved wood-work verandas, which overhung the river. Bismillah caught a view of the procession as

it passed on—peeping through the Venetian blinds. The ladies looked towards Bismillah's house, and blushed when thinking of their recent mortifying defeat. At Chutterbal the barge halted, but swarms of mosquitoes attacked our party—as thick as a swarm of bees. However, a breeze starting, these fragile enemies were soon dispersed, and dinner was quickly served, the floating kitchen pulling up alongside, and disembarking its carefully prepared store of good things. Dinner passed off pleasantly, as all English dinners do, when people know each other;—preserve us from Calcutta dinners—the heat, and the ill-assorted languor of forty guests! It was arranged that the boats should move down the stream during the night; the modulated songs of the rowers soon lull the traveller to sleep. The sharp shrill notes of a flock of geese may occasion a start now and then; but with no official cares to annoy one, where is sleep more sound than that showered down by the guardian angel of the river Jhelum?

The next morning found our travellers halted close to the entrance of the exquisitely beautiful lake of Manus. The large barge not being able to pass under the Bridge of Sambal, our voyagers changed it for a sleeping boat, and passed on into the lake by a canal. Tents were soon pitched on some high ground at the end of the lake, under some truly royal chenar trees—Captain Mull Aziz pointing out the exact spots where Sir Henry Lawrence, Hodson, and Nicholson had formerly pitched their tents. The waters of the Manus lake are strikingly clear and tranquil—they throw a veil of calm repose over the most troubled spirit; many wish that they could at once wash out the dark spots from a seared

heart with the choice peace of the soul-delighting waters of Manus ; but the scars of the heart, like those of the warrior, must remain. To a girl of seventeen, about to fall in love, the Manus Lake would be perfection ; and perhaps, when forsaken by a lover, nothing on the earth would prove more soothing to her feelings than a row on the lake as the sun, tinted by its coloured mantle of clouds, is about to quit this world of sorrow. An old imperial serai may be seen on the banks of the lake, in ruins—a memento of the past Mogul dynasty. Thus we all decay, and pass away : our ear ceases to hear the carol of the lark, our eye to see the riches of the storehouse of nature ! But why mourn over what is inevitable ? Elphinstone and the General are as merry as two boys, fishing for marseer at the Sambal bridge. As good fishing is to be found here as in any part of the valley. Several had already been caught, but Sir Lionel was sadly mortified at having to put aside his fine English flies for a simple piece of dough, which the fish rose at splendidly. The canal to the Manus Lake branches off from the right bank of the Jhelum. The lake would be visible from the Throne of Solomon, were it not for the hill of Aha-thang, which intercepts the view. Most of the lime in use in Sircenuggur is dug from the side of this hill.

Whilst the gentlemen were fishing, the ladies passed their time in those small duties which never appear to begin or end, but still engage the attention of thousands of our countrywomen, provided gentlemen can be banished to their offices or outdoor pursuits.

Mrs. Popkins and Mrs. Poppy discussed the merits of all their gentlemen acquaintances—DeLaré amongst

them. Mrs. Popkins pronounced him a handsome, agreeable man; but Mrs. Poppy clearly stated that Poppy did not think much of him officially. "Then how is it," said Mrs. Popkins, "that he has now been promised one of the best appointments in the Punjaub?"

Mrs. Poppy tried to appear as if she doubted this statement. Mrs. Popkins at once placed Blubber's letter to DeLaré before her, and she blushed at Secretariat duplicity thus signally unveiled. The ladies were almost ready to quarrel, when Sir Lionel entered, with the bland expression which all well-bred Englishmen put on in the presence of ladies. He soon saw that they had had a small difference: he therefore asked, smilingly—"Well, Mrs. Popkins, I fear you must have been dull without any gentlemen to amuse you?"

Mrs. Popkins answered—"We were talking of Captain DeLaré, and the reason why he is now in favour in official circles."

"It is very obvious," replied Sir Lionel: perhaps you are not aware that DeLaré will in a few months be Earl of Blushington, with forty thousand a year! The death of the heir to the title who stood in DeLaré's way is reported by the last mail."

"Bismillah will then be a Countess!" said Mrs. Popkins, rather quickly, thinking of the prospect she had laid out for her own sister; adding, to herself—"But will Bismillah be received in English society? Of course she will, and unquestionably be made a great deal of: no people are so fond of novelty as the English. If, therefore, Bismillah will only marry DeLaré, she may some day rival Blubber in polite and fashionable circles: he now affects to look down on her as a Native of India!"

The Manus Lake is free from mosquitoes ; not so, however, the Wallar Lake, to which our pleasure-seekers now turned the heads of their boats. If the traveller leaves the Manus lake early in the morning, he will reach the Wallar Lake at about 4 P.M. Passing down the river Jhelum, the Maharaja's stud may be inspected at Hanjan : it contains some very serviceable cattle, which may be seen sporting about in the meadows along the bank of the river. The stud is on the left bank. The Wallar lake exhibits to the eye an immense expanse of water, stretching away for eight or ten miles. The singara nut is cultivated on the waters of the lake with great success, and forms a considerable source of revenue —Rs. 80,000 per annum ; but an eye to profit has dimmed the appearance of the lake with a mass of dark-green foliage, through which, at times, a boat forces its way with difficulty, whilst mosquitoes attack the impatient traveller by hundreds. From Bunderpoor, which is snugly located under the hills, the military road branches off to Gilgit, where numbers of Maharaja Goolab Singh's troops have from time to time been wasted away by the sword and the snows of winter. The shrine of Shakuroodeen stands out boldly from the centre of the lake ; a few guardian fakcers hover about it, always ready to encourage the tradition that a supernatural discharge of artillery in the still hour of midnight is the signal for the change of a dynasty.

Mrs. Popkins and Mrs. Poppy were so annoyed by the mosquitoes on the Wallar Lake, that, having remained for one night at Bunderpoor, our party struck across early on the following morning for the far-famed cool climate of the Flowery Mead. The object to be

reached by the evening was the small village of Palhalan, on the opposite side of the valley ; but the hosts of mosquitoes did not cease their attacks until the cool air of the following morning blew briskly as our friends, quitting the boats, ascended the high ground on the road to Baba Shah Reshi. Then, step by step, fresh beauties burst on the sight : apple and pear trees loaded with fruit ; flowers of the most brilliant colours scattered over the ground in careless, luxuriant profusion. It was clear that the discomforts of mosquitoes had given a zest to the enjoyment held out by the new-born day. A trip of four hours brought our party to the shrine of Shah Reshi, which is surrounded by fine cedar trees, and guarded by a fraternity of fakeers. The mountain on which they live is about six thousand feet above the level of the valley ; consequently, a fine view is obtained of the country below. The old chief of the brotherhood readily supplied wood, milk, eggs, fowls and butter—and at once conjectured that Mrs. Poppy was a fanatical English lady, from the colour of her hair ! Upon looking down on the valley, and the sides of the hills, the traveller becomes aware of the vast quantities of land available for colonists ; and as Major Elphinstone felt the cool breeze blowing from the Peer Pinjal range above him, whilst seated at a picnic breakfast, he knew that the future of the valley of Cashmere was destined to be a bright page in the history of European colonisation in the East. After breakfast, a trip was made to the Flowery Mead, about an hour's journey from the tomb of Shah Reshi. It is reached by crossing a cedar-clad hill. Between it and the shrine of Shah Reshi lies undulating ground—meadow land, in short, which

would make an English farmer in one of our most productive counties wild with joy. The lands are three miles long by one mile wide. The Mead should be seen in the month of May, when the snow, clearing away, exhibits to the astonished visitor a carpet of flowers of the most brilliant and varied colouring. Even when our travellers visited the spot there was no want of flowers. A belt of magnificent cedar trees shuts out the outer world. Towards the south-eastern portion of the valley an elevated spot is still pointed out, where the Emperor Jehangeer and the lovely Noor Jehan used to encamp. Upon reaching the spot, Mrs. Popkins exclaimed—"We ought to have crowned Bismillah Queen of the Valley with the flowers which we hold in our hands: why is she not here?"

The stream which runs through the Mead was in former days artificially improved, so as to allow of boats moving up and down it in all the pride of imperial pomp. Alas! Jehangeer now rests but uneasily in the hot tomb at Shadera: what a contrast between life and death—the blooming Bismillah, the ashes of Noor Jehan!

The tents have been pitched on the high ground above the Throne, amongst tall fragrant cedars, whilst a bubbling brook bounds away at our party's feet. As Mrs. Popkins was admiring her own hand, a beautiful butterfly settled on it, and, curiously enough, immediately after, another, still more lovely. One of the hill-men hereupon whispered, loud enough to be heard—"The spirits of the departed still wander over their favourite haunts, even as butterflies!"

CHAPTER XLI.

A RESIDENCE at Sireenuggur tends to indolence; the purity of the air, the beauty of the scenery—so attractive even to the dullest intellect,—produce an easy, listless, and contented mind. The passing from one lovely spot to another in a boat, without any personal fatigue, soon induce a man to put off sight-seeing which demands any great bodily exertion. Englishmen who have walked from the burning plains of the Punjab, been chilled on their passage over the Peer Pinjal pass, and found a resting-place on the charming banks of the Jhelum, free from all official restraint, feel indisposed to move, at least for some time.

Mehesh Chund never drives away a lingerer from the valley; he now and then recommends a change of air towards the end of October: "English gentlemen not stay too long in valley; not custom; ducks, geese, sheep, get thin!"

Natives of Hindoostan often never move out of their houses for months; but, when once moved, it is astonishing what fatiguing journeys even tender delicate women will accomplish, over bad roads, in rough jolting raths. The arrangements for starting for Islamabad were much the same as those for visiting the lake; as far as Islamabad the journey is by water, up the stream of the Jhelum. All was ready by 3 P.M. on the 1st October, and Zeenut and Bismillah stepped into their boat, and were able to reach Pampur, a small town about five coss from Sireenuggur, on the right bank of the river, as the

sun went down. In the vicinity of this town the far-famed saffron grounds of Cashmere may be seen, whose reflection the imaginative poet has described as colouring the skies. The saffron flowers are in full bloom about the middle of November; some few may be found as early as the end of October. The bulb is planted in beds about four feet square. The saffron flower is of a deep lilac colour; it has three long and three short petals, the former of a very deep saffron colour, the latter orange. The long petals produce the good saffron; the short petals are adulterated for the market. When passing up the river, the Throne of Solomon will be a conspicuous object on the left hand.

After encamping for the night, the next day brought our party to the ground of Brijbiara. Wantipoor was passed during the day; also the Mountain of Mastourwan, where DeLaré was amusing himself with shooting. Every eye, and especially Bismillah's, was strained, in vain, to see whether any white speck on the side of the hill marked his whereabouts. There are some fine Pandoo ruins at Wantipoor. At Brijbiara the chenar trees are royal, and signally fine and commanding.

The next morning found the boats at the halting-place close to Islamabad, the captain of the boat having adroitly pulled them along during the night, without any noise. Islamabad was formerly called Anick; its present name was derived from Islam Khan, to whom the town was assigned by one of the Delhi Emperors. When Zeenut and Bismillah were seated in their doolies, the first place to be visited was the fountain of Anantnag, which gushes forth from a conical hill, under whose shelter the town of Islamabad is built. The fountain is

attractive; its waters are distributed amongst three reservoirs, two of which are full of fish, held as sacred by Hindoo pilgrims. The Emperor Akbar first gave the fountain notoriety, by embellishing the grounds about it. As usual, we find the royal chenar both inside and outside the garden enclosure; the ground outside the enclosure is exactly like an English common. The water of the fountain rushes out of the garden under a nice ornamented house, which the Maharaja has provided for the accommodation of European travellers. About four miles from Anantnag there is another attractive Hindoo place of worship—Muttun. To reach it we must keep the high ground of Islamabad, on our right hand. The character of the place is much the same as that of Anantnag, but a tale of modern date is connected with it, which well deserves the traveller's attention.

As Zeenut and Bismillah stood between the two tanks which contain the sacred fish, shrouded with their *boorkhas*, they listened to the tale of the Feringhee Carey and the proud but unfortunate fish Ragooram, recounted by an old Sikh to a crowd of attentive pilgrims. "It was morning; the sun and the stars were reflected brightly in the dark blue waters of the tank of Muttun, when the Feringhee Carey suddenly appeared. He stood where you now see the young lady. The waters were soon fearfully agitated, and became as black as the clouds of dust which mark the mustering of a royal army for battle; the reflection of sun and stars disappeared. Listen well: the noble Ragooram had mustered his forces in line, ready for battle: he advanced in front, his armour bright as the noonday

sun ; he shook his fins, and bade defiance from his eyes to the Feringhee. Noble fish ! he led his legions on. In a moment Carey Saheb would have been torn to pieces ; but calm and collected, with a hog-spear, he struck the noble fish, and, assisted by impious hands, carried off the saviour of the vale of Cashmere !—for when pestilence swept off thousands, Ragooram appeared and cured us all ! Carey Saheb has been banished by a just Government !”

The old Sikh then chanted a verse or so in honour of the fish, of which the chorus reached Bismillah as she left the tank—

“Ragooram’s a Spirit now !”

Bismillah was amused with the incident of the fish ; she felt sorry for Ragooram, whose extreme beauty appeared to have caused his death, since he was of a beautiful red colour, and shone brightly amongst the other fish, with a gold ring in his nose. But Bismillah was too happy at the idea of soon meeting DeLaré to give herself up to grief for Ragooram !

CHAPTER XLII.

THE next day’s trip was to Achbal, a ruined garden, with the most attractive scenery in its immediate vicinity. It is, or rather was, under the protecting shadow of an isolated hill covered with fir trees ; for most of the buildings which were so famed in the times

of the Emperors have now disappeared, or are in ruins. But amidst all this change, the fountains of Achbal still bubble away, forcing themselves up to a height of three or four feet from the ground. The distance from Islamabad to Virnag is ten coss, that to Achbal is about five. The plain which is traversed on the road to Achbal is irregular, in consequence of the numerous water-courses which have been constructed to afford ample moisture to the rice crops, which are the chief source of profit in the neighbourhood of Islamabad. Whilst the plateau which overhangs Islamabad, and then stretches on for miles, is on the right hand when a traveller is proceeding to Muttun, it is on his left when he is on his way to Achbal. Again, the main road for Virnag leaves the small range of hills, under which Achbal has found so secure a retreat, on the left, and hugs the mountain on the right.

Bismillah was in raptures with Achbal ; it exceeded in beauty all that her imagination had ever laid before her. Zeenut was more silent, but thrilled with the scene before her. Indad Ali and Zynooddeen seated themselves under a chenar tree ; the latter, spreading his carpet, which he always carried with him, was soon engaged in prayer. Deoti and Kareeman sat at a distance from the two princesses, and the spirit of Achbal soon crept over all the party, for it is the most lovely spot in the world ! Where was DeLaré ?—what a time, place, and chance for love-making !

Indad Ali, like a wise servant, had a correspondent in Major Elphinstone's camp, and through him he ascertained the altered prospects of DeLaré. A Lord Saheb, and four lakhs of rupees, had due weight with a reflecting

man. Mrs. Popkins had told the news to her ayah, her ayah to Indad Ali's messenger. Indad Ali had dropped the honied words into Deoti's ear, who of course communicated her well-seasoned version to Bismillah, with oriental additions: "The Saheb," said Deoti, "will soon be called for by the Queen to sit in her council, and it is said that he will rule half Velayut; his family jewels alone require thirty trays to move them; his Lady Saheb will, it is said, be chief attendant on Queen Victoria, and have her ear on all Indian matters!"

Bismillah was in raptures with Deoti's news; it was in every way congenial to a royal mind. She at once sent for Zynoodcen, and rewarded him for his speech at Kootub, in which he described the elastic destiny of the house of Timour.

As Bismillah sat by the fountains of Achbal, and caught the murmuring sounds of those everlasting warblers—they never tire, night or day, summer or winter,—she felt all the elastic hope of youth; her path for the future appeared covered with flowers of choice colours. She cared not to talk; her thoughts were all with DeLaré: would he soon make her a Lady Saheb—should she ever return to Delhi in affluence, in triumph—or would he carry her off over the Kala-paneé, and place her in a palace of gold, spangled with pearls, diamonds, rubies, emeralds?—for Bismillah, with her store of English information, gained from DeLaré, still clung to her Native ideas: the Hindoos still think that Ceylon is covered with palaces of gold and silver; and Bismillah imagined that England must be similarly circumstanced. "You have plundered Hindoostan," she used to say to DeLaré, "but, like an Englishman,

you deny that you have carried off all our gold and silver to Velayut. Where is the Peacock Throne?—perhaps you will state that you know nothing about it!”

But DeLaré was now a very different person, in Bismillah's estimation, from what he was when he killed the bear on the side of the throne of Solomon: he was a Shahzada, about to be called to the Durbar of England; and, excepting his religion and a few English peculiarities, he would make a very eligible husband! Deoti ventured now and then, at first, to style DeLaré the Shahzada; but when the party had arrived at Achbal, he was commonly called so by all the party—it seemed so natural, they said, to have a Shahzada amongst them, having lived so long at Delhi!

Bismillah was pleased with the elevated position the hero for whom she had a liking had taken; she therefore soon knew who the Shahzada was. But where was DeLaré? We are ashamed to say that he was, Englishmanlike, fishing on the banks of the Jhelum, whilst a young lady, of royal blood was sighing for his presence in the garden of Achbal! It must, however, be candidly allowed, that Bismillah's bright form was often present with him: English prejudice, from constant association, had been considerably weakened in favour of her. Which was best—Mrs. Poppy's red hair, or Bismillah's coal-black tresses?—which was most natural, the pink and white of the former, or the nut-brown, finely rose-tinted skin of the latter? With all the boasts of English dress, which was most elegant, Mrs. Poppy's bonnet, or Bismillah's simple cloth thrown over her head, which showed its shape so perfectly? DeLaré began to see that Bismillah's dress was not so unbecoming as Mrs.

Popkins wished him to believe; he attributed her strictures in a great measure to spite. DeLaré fished on, his attention distracted between a nibble, a bite, a fish dragged out of the water, and Bismillah! Bismillah's attention was divided between the glancing, bubbling, brawling waters of Achbal. Thus hour after hour passed, and the shadows of evening grew deeper and deeper. Bismillah was conscious that she had passed a happy ideal day: what would not an Englishwoman have done in the time wasted by Bismillah in meditation? But our heroine is young; why not allow her to muse away her time? Many of our English ladies grow very dull when married—with their keys, their accounts, their scoldings of servants, their economy, their jealousy, their want of mental improvement, their conventional propriety, their care to remove all that springs spontaneously from the heart. Our heroine is a pure child of nature: look at her as the breeze of evening blows mildly on her; she has placed her hand in the water of the bubbling fountain—what a picture for a sculptor is our Bismillah!

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE next trip was to Virnag—a very favourite garden of the Emperor Jehangeer. He used to spend the hot months at this secluded spot, indulging, as some say, in an immoderate use of wine; but Emperors are allowed many failings. The limits of the imperial garden can

be traced, but indistinctly. As at Muttun, so at Virnag, there is a tank, well stocked with fish ; but around the tank of the latter place there is a serai, still in tolerable repair. The spring which supplies the water for this tank is called that of Paradise. At Virnag, we seem to be in a valley, quite shut out from the world. A little to the south-east of the serai may be seen a road which leads to Jumoo, over the Banahal Pass ; it is in use for the special convenience of the Maharaja and his family. It was here that General Nicholson years ago waited for the first boom of the cannon which told that Imamooden had determined not to yield possession of the valley to Goolab Singh, and it was over the Banahal Pass that Nicholson escaped.

Whilst travelling to Virnag, one cannot but be struck with the peculiarly attractive nature of the scenery : the plateau land above Islamabad commands notice, stretching away for miles ; range after range towers above it, reaching, as it were, to the heavens, into which many a snow-capped peak appears to pierce. If the summer has its special charm in rich foliage, and luxuriant shade, and running streams of water, the autumn rivals it in its many-coloured mantle, with which it loves to clothe itself in the valley of Cashmere. As Bismillah drew near to Virnag, she marked the brightest colours on the mountain side on her right hand : bright green, yellow, brown, and scarlet ; in truth, if a painter could faithfully depict the scene as viewed by Bismillah, he would at once be seized by a committee of friends and thrust into a lunatic asylum ! As Bismillah approached the garden of Virnag, she peeped out from behind the blinds of her doolee, and her sharp eyes detected an

encampment: her heart almost bounded out of its usual dwelling-place as she asked—could it be that of her cousin the Shahzada?

The doubt was soon solved, for DeLaré was perceived under a tree, inspecting his fishing-tackle. DeLaré had not arrived by accident; a line from Indad Ali had told him that Bismillah would visit Virnag; and as the Virnag valley was clear of Englishmen, with whom could he spend a more pleasant time in this lovely locality than with Bismillah?

Bismillah was especially pleased; her face was radiant with kindly feeling, and her eye and mouth had lost a little of their usually harsh appearance. What lady would not look kindly on a peer with forty thousand a year! The rival camps were pitched, and the descendants of the race of Timour stood on the ground, which was, as it were, consecrated by past history to the royal family of Delhi. DeLaré was of course asked to spend the evening with Bismillah. He did not care to refuse the invitation, but found sitting on the ground in the absence of chairs rather awkward; for whilst Bismillah sat on the ground he could not think of sitting on a chair.

Bismillah was in capital spirits, and more beautiful than ever; in fact, DeLaré thought that *he had never* seen so charming a young lady. *We recommend all* mammas who have daughters to be married to send their admirers into the solitary jungle for a few days on a shooting expedition; they always come back more pliant than they went.

Bismillah of course sharply attacked DeLaré on the folly of fishing: "How much more dignified," said she,

“it would be to get a few fish, if you really want them, by giving a fisherman an anna or two !”

DeLaré urged in his defence that there was great pleasure in fishing.

Bismillah remarked—“Do not try to make me believe that you are really so foolish !”

At last DeLaré offered to take Bismillah out fishing the next day. She at first laughed at the proposal ; but seeing that DeLaré was serious, she thought that it would be as well to spend a day in her cousin’s society, to humour him, and fall in with his folly : she therefore replied, laughingly—“When those of the race of Timour spend their time in fishing, who will pay the poor fisherman ?”

Indad Ali knew where good fish could be caught, and Bismillah, calling him after DeLaré’s departure, inquired—“How long will the Shahzada fish ?”

“From sunrise to sunset !”

“What,” asked Bismillah, “makes Englishmen so ardent in all their pursuits ?”

“A conquering spirit,” replied Indad Ali.

“And yet,” said Bismillah, “in matters where marriage is concerned, they appear to neglect their own interests !”

“They are bashful,” answered Indad Ali, “and make, as it were, deities of those whom they love !”

Bismillah was puzzled. “What !” exclaimed the princess : do they consider their wives better than themselves ?”

“I fear,” said Indad Ali, “their ladies consider themselves unrivalled, and henpeck their husbands !”

Bismillah was more and more perplexed, and said,

with hesitation—"I wonder whether my cousin thinks me better than he is?"

Indad Ali replied, with his hands clasped—"If your slave may be allowed to utter words spoken by the Shahzada, he is ready to speak."

"Speak, then," cried Bismillah.

"The Shahzada's constant proverb is—"The worst woman is better than the best man!"

"Leave me!" said Bismillah.

The slave disappeared. Bismillah bit her lip with passion as she exclaimed—"The English tongue is sharper than the Feringhee sword: words for women, blows for men!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE news soon spread through camp that the next day was destined as a holiday for fishing. Indad Ali smiled, and prepared the necessary tackle, whilst Zynooddeen looked grave, and searched for precedents in the *Ayini Akbari*—for he was a stickler for etiquette. Deoti promised herself a happy day in the open air, a treat which all Cashmere girls thoroughly enjoy. Kareeman viewed the whole affair with wonder, hardly knowing what to think of fishing, until Zynooddeen had consulted his oracle. DeLaré was a little perplexed as to how Bismillah would be able to fish behind the purdah. Zeenut Begum felt impressed with the idea that the world was changing from what it was when she was

a girl. The camp was soon hushed in silence, for early hours are its peculiar attendants. But Bismillah could not sleep—the events of the day had disturbed her brain; she therefore was restless and watchful, thinking over her future lot. But when silence had gained uncontrolled sway, unbroken except by the shrill cry of the watchman calling upon all to “Take care!” she became aware that some one was lifting up the kanauts of her tent, for she occupied one separated by purdahs from that in which Zeenut her sister slept. Even the bravest of us feel timid in the still hour of midnight, when we feel, as it were, alone. Bismillah perhaps felt a little timid at first; but with the instinct of a Timour, the heritage derived from a wild race of ancestors, she searched about for something with which to defend herself. She soon recollected a long knife being in the corner of the tent, which had been placed there by Indad Ali; and she slipped out of bed, seized it, and waited for the next sign of an intruder. Almost an hour passed away, but no noise was detected by Bismillah’s sharp ear. She felt almost disappointed, for her blood was thoroughly warmed with the excitement of the moment. “Afraid of a girl!” she said, with scorn on her lip: but a noise was again audible, the purdah was raised, and the form of a man was seen by the light of the moon to enter the tent. Bismillah seized her knife, and raised herself to her full height; but the form stood still, and a voice called out quietly—“Bismillah!”

Bismillah at once replied—“Who dares enter Bismillah’s tent, and call her name?”

“I!” answered the voice of the figure.

“Who?”

“The Nana!” replied the figure.

“Accursed man!” cried Bismillah—“stained with the blood of women and children: how dare you talk to me? The Royal Family of Delhi owes to you the blackest deeds of treachery, of perfidy, of disgust?”

The Nana said—“I have wandered from Nepaul to Lassa, from thence to Yarkund, then over the Snowy Range to Cashmere, and have trusted to find protection from one of the race of Timour!”

“You shall find the protection you deserve from a Timour!” replied the young girl, with firmness: “Approach!” And the eye and the firmly compressed lip, with the heaving bosom, told of resolution and fixed purpose. The Nana approached.

“Kneel!” said she. The Nana knelt.

The girl raised the knife, and with frantic energy plunged it into the demon before her, exclaiming—“Thus has the feeble arm of a girl avenged her house, and the murdered women and children of a noble race have found repose.” But the excitement had proved too much for her; she fainted, and only awoke at the call of Kareeman, who expatiated on the fineness of the day. She felt confused at first, but soon collected herself: could the scene of the night have been a dream? No!—for, as she looked at the knife, which lay on the ground near her, it was stained with blood. Excepting these marks, there was nothing to betray the events of the night: could it have been a mere dream? No!—for the knife told the tale of blood.

The cloud soon passed from Bismillah’s mind as she heard DeLaré’s voice collecting the bearers for her doolee; and as he cried out “Bismillah!—what would

you do with a fickle lover?—Here is a girl who complains that she has been abandoned!”—she lifted the purdah, and said—“I have a cure even for a faithless lover!”

CHAPTER XLV.

A RESTLESS night is fully compensated for by the invigorating feeling which is generated by the fresh morning air blowing calmly from the snow-clad peaks above the plains of Islamabad. Bismillah acknowledged the truth of this idea by more than usual vivacity as the cavalcade receded from the springs of Virnag, the birthplace of the river Jhelum; for the fish must be sought at a distance from Virnag, where the stream is very narrow. DeLaré, Indad Ali, and Zynooddeen all rode small Cashmere ponies, very active, and sure-footed on rough ground. The Prince, as he was now generally styled, rode a little in advance of the two horsemen; close enough, however, to converse with them. Bismillah, in her doolce, was a little in the rear. About half a mile from Virnag a close litter passed her, and upon her attendants asking who was in it, one of the attendants replied, “A poor man who was wounded last night by thieves!”

Bismillah at once knew that the Nana was close to her: the litter passed on, and with it the chance of the

reward of one lakh of rupees offered for the capture of the fiend. At last, the place for fishing was reached; and Bismillah, as well as Zeenut, were instructed in the art of baiting a hook, and the tempting offerings were let down into the water. Bismillah could hardly support her rod with her right hand. Indad Ali was ready to bait Bismillah's hook, and Zynooddeen condescended to attempt the same office for the prince; but it ended in his directing the efforts of a Cashmere boy who was an adept in that occupation, and in seeing fish bite.

Bismillah now and then called to the prince, who was at no great distance, inquiring what sport he had had; indeed, she could hear his conversation. With him, Bismillah soon caught the fishing infection, and regarded her rod and line with great interest. Zynooddeen soon relapsed into apathy as regarded fishing, and sitting down on his carpet commenced reading.

Bismillah, seeing her servant thus engaged, called out—"Read!" The obedient servant read, in a clear and sonorous voice—

"O pride of Shiraz, nymph divine!
Accept my heart and yield me thine:
Then, were its price all Samarcand,
The wealth Bokhara's wall command,
That pretty mole of dusky dye
Thy cheek displays, I'd gladly buy!"

Bismillah called out to the prince, and said—"I fear that your English nobles would not have been so liberal as the poor poet Hafiz, to secure their wishes;—they would doubtless have promised a good deal!"

The prince replied very aptly—"Your royal ancestor

you must remember, did not approve of such liberality!"

All were struck at the ready reply, and Bismillah was pleased with the allusion to Timour.

"The West," replied Zynoodcen, "is indebted to the East for more than it will honestly acknowledge."

"For what?" asked the prince.

"For its religious discipline in spiritual imagination."

"But Greece disciplined our reason and our taste," said the prince

"Enough!" said Bismillah, impatient of a conversation in which she could not take a place: "tell us what the Jews ever did good?"

The prince readily answered—"They disciplined the human conscience."

Bismillah again called out—"Zynoodcen! let us hear of eastern poetry. The prince apparently knows more than we fancy he does;—but the English are never at a loss for an apt turn, like a hare followed by a dog!"

Zynoodcen was fond, as are all Mahomedans, of displaying his knowledge; they are more showy in dress, living, and general expenditure, than Hindoos; indeed, they still have a good deal of a conquering spirit in them. "The Persian language," said Zynoodcen, "is so copious and elegant, as to render it peculiarly well adapted for the expression of all the feelings in which poetry loves to revel; but it certainly has this one defect—in the present day it is more than ever foreign in Hindoostan, into which English is so rapidly forcing its way, favoured by an all-powerful Government. Still its culture should not be neglected; for, although the classical writers of Greece and Rome are the accepted

models of perfection in the Western world, Persian poetry should be tested by other standards. Following an exuberant fancy, disdaining the control which a cold climate would impose upon it, it gives full scope to the wildness of the imagination, and embellishes its thoughts with the most brilliant gems of ever-varying idealism. The Persians, accustomed to a cloudless sky, and to a constant association with nature in her most attractive forms; to the perfume of flowers in the serenity of evening; to the companionship of the moon in the still hour of midnight, together with a canopy of stars spread over their heads when reclining on their house-tops, lived, as it were, with, and drew their images from, the most attractive and seductive natural objects. The old religion of the Fire-Worshipper was not eradicated by the sword of Islam. The romance of Wanik and Asra still beams forth from the sixth century; it sings of times before the Flood, the days of old, when angels sought communion with mankind.

"But why should I weary my mistress with verses which she knows by heart? She will recollect that in the tenth century Firdusi appeared at the court of Mahmoud of Ghuzni: a patron of letters, he rendered himself immortal, like Homer of old, by his *Shah Nameh*, a heroic poem.

"Why should I mention the revenge of the poet on the stinginess of the monarch who paid him with 60,000 pieces of silver instead of 60,000 pieces of gold? All recollect. What could one expect from the son of a slave, but that sooner or later he would turn out a knave?

"The golden age of Persian Literature was from the tenth to the thirteenth century. Poets were sought

for, cherished, and encouraged. To possess a poet was distinction in itself. But Arabic was now largely mixed with Persian. The end of the twelfth century produced Saadi. Shiraz was the fortunate city of his birth. He comes next in rank to Firdusi himself, and excels all the other Persian poets in his province. Saadi hardly knows a rival in serious humour; but as a writer of fable and epigram, he stands on a pinnacle of fame as high as the tower of the Kootub. Although, perhaps, in taste, and intellectual polish, the Persian poet must stand on a lower step of the temple of literature, and even Firdusi must allow the blind old Homer to pass by him to the niche for the best of epic writers, still, when imagination, stimulated by a clear sky, a bright sun, and the most congenial natural scenery, brings in her band of Persian writers of poetry and romance, all must give way on the score of originality.

“All our best apophthegms and fables must be laden on Eastern poets; and, indeed, the most enduring will be found in the custody of Saadi. Either our European and Eastern poets are indebted to a common mine of wealth in the shrines of Sanskrit literature, or else Saadi threw off his apologues, and choice prized moral sentences, from his classic forge, at Shiraz, to be passed into Spain by the fiery and then conquering Moor, and there copied into Latin for general diffusion by the monk in the retired cloister. Thus the bright, florid imagination of the East removed a weight—that of apathy—from the religious ascetic of the West.

“Saadi made many pilgrimages to our holy Mecca, and fought for the faith, for which he suffered as a prisoner at Tripoli. A merchant of Aleppo, seeing the

poet, rescued him for ten dinars, and gave him his daughter in marriage. She, however, proved an uncongenial spirit, and taunted the poet with having been rescued by her father for ten dinars——”

“Saadi gave a good answer,” said Bismillah: “‘Yes,’ replied he; ‘but only to enslave me to you for a hundred!’”

Zynooddeen bowed his head, and proceeded: “The appearance of the *Gulistan* and *Bostan* secured the fame of Saadi. The *Gulistan* is, however, the most celebrated; its leaves are spangled with moral precepts, and also strongly marked with those of a political tone. Again, the more solid philosophical sentences engage the man of science, whilst moral maxims, epigrams, and *bon mots* are showered down with sparkling vivacity and bright colouring on the heads of a crowd of admirers of all capacities, from the king to the beggar at his gate.

“Saadi, towards the close of his life, built a hermitage, and thus indulging a passion for seclusion, died at an advanced age, leaving his memory and tomb at Shiraz to posterity.

“But I shall weary you all with my narrative,” said Zynooddeen.

“Not by any means!” cried a crowd, which always collects in the East at the bare mention of a poet.

“Before I pass on to the rapturous poems of a Hafiz, I must mention that the ascetic devotees of the East, *Sufis*, as they are called, owe their rise to the second century of the Hegira, and are fond of the idea of a mystic union with the Deity, which has led them into poetical description not suited to gravity or solemnity of

religion. I will, with your permission, recite a favourite *ghazal* of mine."

All cordially agreed.

The narrator proceeded to recite with the zest of an amateur—

" 'Pants thy spirit to be gifted
With a deathless life ?
Let it seek to be uplifted
O'er earth's storm and strife.

" 'Spurn its joys, its ties dis sever,
Hopes and fears divest ;
Thus aspire to live for ever,
Be for ever blest !

" 'Faith and doubt leave far behind thee ;
Cease to love or hate :
Let not Time's illusions blind thee ;
Thou shalt time outdate.

" 'Merge thine individual being
In the Eternal's love ;
All this sensuous nature fleeing,
For pure bliss above.

" 'Earth receives the seed and guards it,
Trustfully it dies :
Then, what teeming life rewards it
For self sacrifice !

" 'With green leaf and clustering blossom
Clad, or golden fruit,
See it from earth's cheerless bosom
Ever sunward shoot.

" 'Thus, when self-abased, man's spirit
From each earthly tie
Rises disenthralled, to inherit
Immortality !'

“And now I have to bring to your special notice the august and illustrious ancestor of our ever-blessed mistress; the world-known Emperor Timour, who was an especial patron of Persian poetry. Indeed, India is indebted to this source for the language and the poetry of Persia. The Tartar dynasty thus effected for Hindoostan what the introduction of French into Europe brought about; the taste for poetry, which marked the conduct of the Emperor Timour, was a legacy in the keeping of the royal family of Delhi, which Zaffer parted not with when he passed forth from the gate of the city.

“A captive, Timour the lame took especial delight in the society of Hafiz; who was a constant inmate of the palace of Samarcand.

“The Persian language did not suffer from the Tartar invasion, which might have been expected.

“The compositions of Hafiz are certainly the most elegant of any which have flowed from the pens of poets of the East. To some he appears to be a perfect Anacreon; to others a match for Horace—[pardon my pronunciation of these words]. Shiraz boasted of his presence in the fourteenth century, and has cherished his memory ever since. I will read you one or two verses: but time presses:—

“‘Sweet maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck enfold,
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bokhara’s vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.’

“But why do I weary you with the memory of a

poet who so charms all who approach his writings?
Again—

“‘Ye odorous gales, as ye merrily roam,
Should ye pass on your way by my mistress’ home,
Bear hither to me, I implore you—O bear,
The exquisite perfume she flings from her hair!’

“But one of the poet’s most admired poems is perhaps
that in which he commences with the burst of feeling—

“‘Veiled is my soul in this material clay :
Blest be the hour that tears the veil away !
The imprisoned bird in sadness pours her strains :
So pines my soul to join her native plains !
Whence am I come—or where had I my birth ?
Alas ! I know not ; nor aught else on earth.
Confined and bound in this material state,
How shall I soar to purer realms of fate ?’

“But I must not linger on these pleasant fields too
long. Jami reminds me of the corruption of pure
Persian poetry in the fifteenth century, and thus for 400
years its lamp burnt dimly ; but again, in the memory
of many an old Delhi lover of song, the blind old
Emperor, Shah Alum, poured forth his complaints
within the walls of the palace of Delhi, close to the
place where the traitor *ghulam* deprived him of sight :—

“‘Once more
O’er Delhi’s plains your legions pour :
Has British justice, Britain’s boast,
With Hastings left Hindoostan’s coast ?
Are favours past remembered not—
A ceded empire—all forgot ?
Forgot the day when first they came,
And humbly urged the stranger’s claim ?’

"But my voice fails me—my mouth is dried up—my eyes fill with tears—when I call to mind the verses of Zaffer: they must be considered with the modern poets of Delhi."

"Well done!" cried out the prince: "Bismillah has caught a fish!" It was a large fish, and the eyes of the young girl at once told the interest she took in its capture, although fishing was a British sport. A dozen men were soon in the water, and a landing-net under the fish; there was a great kicking and splashing, and the captured victim lay on the green velvet turf. Bismillah turned to the prince, who was standing close to her, and said—"Cousin, am not I clever? You, with all your pretended skill, have caught nothing; I, a poor Indian girl, have caught this fish! When will the English do justice to our people; when will a prince learn where the heart is buried which could govern Hindoostan?" *

CHAPTER XLVI.

BISMILLAH wept!—and why? A day of excitement and pleasure had been succeeded by one of depression and pain. Although many of her retainers were moving about in the camp at Virnag, still all society appeared

* We beg to tender our thanks to *Chambers's Repository* for the flowers it has furnished to us in the composition of this chapter.

to be shut out from her : even her sister being in the tent next to her did not give her the ordinary pleasure she would have felt had not her mind been in a troubled state. And why was the mind of the young girl clouded? DeLaré had gone forth on a shooting expedition, and would not be back until evening ! This was the cause of Bismillah's anxiety. She thought of the cheerful tone of the past day, and compared it with the solitary state in which the present had found her. And what was the future to bring forth—happy days, spent for ever in DeLaré's house, as a wife, or a miserable existence elsewhere?

These were the questions which the young girl's heart asked itself, almost without her consent. In a word, Bismillah was treading on the very verge of that ideal land which holds so many delusions up before a young girl—bright, glittering, and attractive ; and leading her on step by step, hardly lets her know her danger until well within its toils. There is then no retreat, no looking back with pleasure to the past days of childhood ; for a new existence has been entered upon. Bismillah knew that she was not the same in feeling as she used to be, and felt vexed with herself : for DeLaré, with all his attractive qualities, was still so different from her in many of those points in which she, as a Mahomedan and a princess, prided herself. There was no denying the fact that, waking or sleeping, actively engaged or indolently occupied with the lovely scenery before her, DeLaré was never absent from the young girl's thoughts.

Bismillah had, since morning, made several inquiries as to what time and by which road DeLaré would return. All were unable to give the coveted news, saying that the

prince was seldom given to much talking. And thus the time passed on. At last, Deoti came to the rescue, and brought the very welcome message to Bismillah that the Prince hoped to return by the Banehal road. This was quite sufficient for Bismillah; she at once ordered her doolee to be got ready, and started up the hill, urging on the bearers at their full speed. As she approached a small grove of pear trees on the left hand side of the road, she uttered a cry of joy, for DeLaré was there before her, calmly sitting amongst the shady trees, and gazing on the charming prospect.

Bismillah called out to him—"Cousin, you are the falsest man alive!"

"Why?" asked DeLaré, with the placid smile of an Englishman.

"Do you ask me why? You take me out fishing with you one day, only to neglect me and make me feel more miserable the next. I believe that you English judges are the most cruel men on earth! What have I done that you should bewitch me with your English customs, suited to your English young missee babas, who spend their days in visiting, talking, and riding, and their nights in dancing? Oh Cousin, Cousin!" And then Bismillah burst into tears, and ordered her doolee to be set down with a passionate exclamation!

Now, a young girl in tears is always a very dangerous companion. On this point, women know their strength; for tears add to the brilliancy of the eye. We are not speaking of those ferret-eyed women who will cry and spoil their beauty, by rubbing their eyes with their pocket-handkerchiefs, but allude to tears judiciously shed.

DeLaré felt their power, and taking Bismillah's hand, sat down by her doolee, and said—"My dear Bismillah, I am sorry to have grieved you."

"Cousin," answered Bismillah, "you English have no hearts—no feelings! You know you think it right to deceive a woman!"

DeLaré was somewhat staggered by this sudden attack, and hardly knew what to reply; for he guessed that Bismillah had heard one of those Native rumours so often spread to the prejudice of his nation. He therefore cautiously pressed Bismillah's hand, and said—"Cousin, I could never deceive you, who have always been so kind to me."

"Kind to you," fired up Bismillah, "and you repay me thus! Let go my hand! Why do I listen to false words from English lips? Why have you left me, for a whole day, to follow wretched bears in the jungle?"

This was a case complicated by tears, and questions, and reproaches quite foreign to it; and DeLaré found, that with all his English education, and polish, and political training under the Punjab Government, he was no match for his beautiful opponent. He had now to answer a plain question—why did he follow bears in the jungle? Why? He thought for a few moments, and then said—"I wished to get a bear's skin for your ent!"

Oh! lessons taught by Blubber in the school for young diplomatists—what a conquest! Bismillah again took DeLaré's hand, and said—"Cousin, you are too good to me; I have been to blame! But whilst I listen to you, and believe you speak the truth, I almost tremble at your English winning ways! Cousin, we must

have another pleasant day amongst these lovely mountains ; but you must not practice your cunning speeches and ways upon me, for I am only a silly girl compared with your English ladies. If you deceive me, I shall melt like mountain dew before the conquering sun ! ”

DeLaré drew a ring from his finger, and placed it on his cousin's hand, saying gaily—“ English cousins are always true to each other. And now 'tis time to go home ! ”

Bismillah glanced at the ring as it sparkled on her finger. It was a diamond, with a forget-me-not. She felt the blood rush to her cheeks as she said—“ Cousin, when the world is so gloomy without, why bid a simple girl never to forget ? ”

DeLaré answered quickly—“ Bismillah—I said nothing ! ”

“ Nothing, truly,” replied Bismillah : “ what call you this ? ” as she held up the ring before DeLaré's face.

DeLaré answered slowly—“ The ring is set with a forget-me-not.”

Bismillah cried out passionately—“ Oh Cousin, Cousin ! —take care how you trifle with a Delhi Princess ! ”

Bismillah now returned to her tent, and was welcomed by her sister Zeenut, who at once perceived that she was very much agitated. She soon asked her what was the matter, with all the kind confidence which sisterly affection imparts. After a few minutes' hesitation, Bismillah said—“ Sister, I know not what to say : this cousin of ours is so kind, but I fear false. But perhaps I do not understand his English ways. He says such charming things with a manner cold as ice ! ”

English education must be a bad thing to teach such evil ways!"

Zeenut said kindly—"Wait with patience, Bismillah; no man could be as brave as DeLaré, and false to his own cousin."

Indad Ali now coughed, and having been admitted, said—"The prince sends for his cousin Bismillah a small present." There was a noise outside the tent, and an enormous bear was placed on the ground.

Indad Ali continued his approach by saying—"The prince was warned not to attack this bear, the fiercest in the Virnag forest."

"And what did he say?" asked Zecnut.

"He answered," replied Indad Ali, "that the bear should be placed as a trophy at the feet of the fairest lady in Cashmere before evening!"

Bismillah answered proudly—"An Englishman always keeps his promise. Tell the prince that a princess of the house of Delhi can reward a brave cousin: give him this ring."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE next day's trip was fixed for the far-famed temple of Martund. It is placed high on the plateau above Islamabad; it was therefore necessary to retrace the way for some distance. All were transported with the idea of a move, for people of the East always love and

enjoy a change. DeLaré, after the lecture he had received the day before from Bismillah, was careful to be present and see her start in her doolee. She was in capital spirits; the gloom of the day before had passed away, and her eyes and cheeks were brilliant with all the attractions of youth. Thus the party moved on, DeLaré in advance, with Indad Ali and Zynooddeen. The prince's feelings, were, however, of a mixed character, and not by any means free from apprehension for the future. Had he remained without a taint of English blood, and not enjoyed the advantage of an English education, he had been perfectly happy, for he would then have known nothing of official restraint, and society's prejudices; he would have found in Bismillah all that he could wish as a native—a high-bred, clever, beautiful and attractive girl. He would have ridden by her doolee with all the submission of an enslaved admirer. But a trip to England had altered everything, and retransportation to India had made matters worse. He felt how entirely he was cut off from his mother's family. The English in India are more prejudiced than the English in England about mixed blood; and yet no nation is made up of so much mixed blood as the English. DeLaré knew very well that as soon as it was reported officially to Blubber that he had married a Native lady of pure Eastern blood of royal descent, the big book would be taken out of the desk, and a note would be placed against his name: "DeLaré—unfit for advancement; married his cousin Bismillah, a Native lady of high rank!"

And yet, a little blood of some good Eastern family infused into Blubber's veins would not have injured his

family, which could only pride itself on its humble origin.

Again, DeLaré knew that when once his marriage was proclaimed, all his English friends would shun him!—even the amiable and charming Mrs. Popkins would slight him; and Poppy even—yes, even the mercantile Poppy—would affect to scorn him! DeLaré clearly saw the breakers against which he was hurrying; and yet he perceived no retreat with honour: Bismillah's want of education, and her religion, were against her; also her inability to speak English, and her want of knowledge of English etiquette. Still, in instinctive pride, she could match the proudest peeress in England. She could speak her own language with courtlike purity; she was perfect in the intricate etiquette of a Native court, knowing all by heart; she was a good Mahomedan as far as she had been taught; and as to beauty, even the pale-faced daughters of Belgravia could not rival her. But what can equal the mind of an English girl well brought up—what compensate for the want of those principles which are taught at our English firesides from hour to hour, from day to day, from year to year? These are the pearls which brighten up the path of life, which adorn the mother when her beauty has fled, which guide a national feeling of love and admiration for all that is good and honourable. The lady of the East parts with her beauty, but she has none of those bright jewels to supply its place which are at the command of an English peasant-girl, enshrined in principles which our system of education holds out to all. Surely England is the land to live in: there virtue blossoms on every tree.

Still DeLaré was aware that there was one contingency which would alter everything: if that curtain rose, all mist and doubt would be dispelled as far as public opinion was concerned, and the future would be clear and bright. When he became the Earl of Blushington, all would bow before him. Bismillah, as an Indian princess, and a countess with a town house, a country house, carriages, horses and servants, would figure at court, and be envied by those who despised her an hour before! Blubber would turn round like a weather-cock, and all Anglo-Indians would fawn on the girl in England whom they would spurn in India! Mothers of Belgravia would envy Bismillah's lot, and the most fashionable circles would soon make allowance for her accent as foreign, admire her complexion, and court her society; gentlemen would flock to her balls; even Lord Palmerston would ask her opinion on Eastern politics, and Sir Charles Wood would soon provide for DeLaré if he cared to be patronised. In a word, Bismillah would become a London lioness! As her carriage drew up at fashionable shops, the row of sitting footmen would rise and bow with obsequious decorum—for a princess commands respect in London.

Thus DeLaré ruminated, and saw the bright and gloomy side of the future panorama of life. Perhaps Bismillah saw some of the advantages of position, but of course her mind was far less expanded, and incapable of taking in all the *pros* and *cons* of married life.

The temple of Martund was gained; but other visitors had reached the spot also—Major Elphinstone, Sir Lionel, and Popkins, Poppy, and their ladies.

DeLaré hesitated for a moment, but Bismillah exclaimed—"Prince, what a magnificent temple!"

Sir Lionel now stepped forward, and, with the grace of a man of the world, shook hands with DeLaré, and asked him to introduce him to his two cousins, who were looking out of their doolees.

Bismillah paid Sir Lionel the most graceful compliment as to his reputation as a first-rate officer, and the pleasure she felt at meeting him: and Zeenut was equally gracious.

Sir Lionel having broken the ice, Mrs. Popkins and Mrs. Poppy advanced, and spoke a few words to the princesses. Major Elphinstone, Poppy, and Popkins appeared in the presence of the two princesses more like criminals than British officials!

Bismillah, perceiving their embarrassment, said—"Gentlemen, do not be afraid; I am only a simple girl!"

The three gentlemen bowed, and blushed all the colours under the sun. At last Poppy spoke—"Prince-s, this is the proudest moment of my life; the reward of competition is introduction into royal circles!"

The gentlemen and ladies hereupon burst out laughing, and said—"Admirable, Poppy!"

Bismillah looked surprised, and a little alarmed. DeLaré, however, soon explained that all were merry at Poppy's official conceit. She then appreciated the joke, and said blandly—"Poppy is a pillar of the state: happy the Government that can secure such able wuzcers! Ladies, will you honour me with your presence at my tents! My servants have prepared excellent coffee."

Bismillah and the English ladies retired, and the gentlemen were left alone. All were enchanted with both Bismillah's address and beauty. After a few minutes' brisk conversation, Sir Lionel, Major Elphinstone, and DeLaré seated themselves under one of the corridors of the Martund temple, and Poppy and Popkins slipped away to their tents.

Poppy ventured—"I smell treason!"

"Nonsense!" said Popkins.

"'Pon honour!" replied Poppy.

In a moment Poppy was at his desk, and wrote—

"TEMPLE MARTUND.

"DEAR SIR ROBERT,—Matters are becoming very complicated up here. Captain DeLaré will, I think, marry his cousin Bismillah, and then claim the Delhi throne. 'We live in troubled times,' Sir John Lawrence truly said; 'I fear for the future.' I fear for the present and the future! The political horizon is fearfully clouded. What if Bismillah should form an alliance with the Dost; tamper with our Native army, talk over our British officers! Major Elphinstone, Popkins (a weak fellow), and Sir Lionel, all seem captivated. My dear Mrs. Poppy has gone into the zenana to pick up a little news. Oh, Sir Robert, I am fearfully excited! Would that I had remained at home, and never become a Wala. Pray do not show this to Blubber; he is awfully nervous and excitable.

"Believe me, yours most tenderly,

(Signed) "GREEN POPPY."

"P.S.—Should anything happen to me, Blubber knows all about my will. Please have a handsome

paragraph put into the *Lahore Chronicle* about me should I perish—it would encourage the Walas! ‘Full many a flower is born to blush unseen’ would, I think, do for my epitaph; but I leave the details to you. Government will feel my loss severely.—Farewell!”

Poppy’s despatch was received in due time at Lahore, and was forwarded to the Governor-General as a proof that all Competitioners are not blessed with strong brains or nerves; but Blubber added a postscript unknown to the Lieutenant-Governor—“Exceptions prove the rule!”

CHAPTER LXVIII.

SIR LIONEL was one of those engaging men of the world who, from having associated with many grades of society, both in England, in the colonies, and on the Continent, had learnt to enjoy himself everywhere, and never for a moment listened to local class prejudices, which would have deprived him of half his enjoyment, and almost all opportunities of making his own observations on society in general. He soon became aware of the service peculiarities in India; knew how far to travel in his opinions with Major Elphinstone, and went to fall in with the conceits of Poppy and his vast ideas as to the importance to mankind of a Punjab secretary and the civil service. He could chat agreeably enough with DeLaré when his jungle shyness wore off. With

the belongings of Poppy and Popkins he was a great favourite, for he immediately fell into their ways, and talked of dress, fashions, novels, hair, complexions, figures, busts, etiquette, housekeeping, French dishes, patchwork, worsted-work, &c., and would hold out a skein of silk with the patience of a Job, humming an Italian opera if necessary; if desirable, he would have managed the threads of the skein—to quote Blubber’s simile—as cleverly as if he had had to deal with a grand army.

Sir Lionel managed, with the aid of an interpreter, to say a good many pleasant things to Miss Bismillah and Mrs. Zecnut: he pointed out the peculiar architecture of the Martund Temple with the knowledge of a *connoisseur*, talked of Pandoos long since departed, offered an opinion as to the date of the construction of these gigantic relics, measured the length and breadth of the vast court which enclosed the main buildings, pointed to the fine carving on some of the prostrate pillars, and noted the channels left for the blood to pour out of the interior of the temple when the old religion of the Buddhists required that blood should atone for sin. The view of the valley below also was commented on: DeLaré’s name quietly introduced, his great expectations as Earl of Blushington were adroitly weaved into the conversation, and he was spoken of as a rising man. In truth, DeLaré’s prospects appeared so bright, that even Poppy poured a little balm on his head from his secretary’s cruse, and began to regret that he had not protected him under the shelter of his capacious wing. As it was, he strutted up to DeLaré, and said blandly—“’Pon, honour, Sir, glad to find

you're so well connected : no note of it in the secretary's office ! ”

DeLaré said coldly—“Connexions are nothing in India ! ”

“True, true ! ” said Poppy ; “merit is everything : look at me—a Competitioner ! ”

Sir Lionel shrugged his shoulders, and said—“De Laré, do you smoke ? ”—and, taking his arm, led him away, and they then sat down on a fallen column, and smoked on in silence for a few minutes. But Poppy soon ran up with a letter in his hand ; it was addressed—“ (On H. M.'s Service.)—To the Earl of Blushington, Sireenuggur.—Charles Wood, Secretary for India.”

Poppy placed it in DeLaré's hands with the most profound bow, and would have spoken ; but Sir Lionel led the officious secretary off.

And what were DeLaré's feelings ? He felt that he was a free man ! He opened the letter with a trembling hand, and read how Sir Charles Wood had taken the greatest care to inform him as soon as possible of the demise of the late Earl, and requested his immediate return home. A high political appointment was offered to him, if of Lord Palmerston's way of thinking as to politics. A steamer from Bombay was placed at his disposal. In fact, nothing could be kinder or more considerate than Sir Charles' letter ; it breathed the gentleman and the diplomatist in every word.

All were soon on the road to Islamabad, bound for Sireenuggur. The Earl's death was no subject of personal regret to DeLaré, so Sir Lionel took the earliest opportunity of congratulating him, hoping that they would soon meet in Town. When the news was com-

municated to Bismillah, she caught hold of DeLaré's hand with fervour, and said—"Cousin—you deserve any good fortune, for you are brave and good!"

The next morning found the party at Sircenuggur, and DeLaré's having become a Lord Saheb was soon the topic of general conversation. Indad Ali and Zynooddeen at once presented their nuzzurs, and wished the Earl health and prosperity. There was, as is the custom in the East, a host of well wishers, and poets repeated verses expressive of their interest in the auspicious event. It was soon rumoured that the Prince would be a special wuzeer of Queen Victoria; that his riches were enormous—that he owned half England, and that one hundred young princesses of the highest families in England were ready to marry the young Earl, their parents or guardians having deputed special agents to the East to negotiate for so exalted an alliance.

And what did Bismillah think? She knew not what to think: a brilliant prospect appeared to be spread out before her; but, after all, might it not be a mirage—might it not escape her grasp? One thing was certain—the fortune of one of the family of Timour was in the ascendant, and the young girl's cheeks glowed with pride as she thought of the homage which was being paid to the descendant of the Pearl; and as she gazed out of the window of her house at Sircenuggur, a hand touched her softly, and a voice said "Bismillah!"

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE nobility of England have long been distinguished for their pride of birth, their caste exclusiveness, and their polished, quiet, unassuming manners. Mentally endowed, as a body, with varied accomplishments, they always command respect, for they can always bring a fair share of talent to bear on those questions which so often affect the masses of mankind politically. Whilst the storm rises high, and words are uttered with all the point of invective or the heat of passion in the Lower House, the Upper House is calm, placid, dignified, and almost icy, when many a heart would willingly give vent to the passion and party spirit which enslaves it. The Earl of Blushington already found that the coronet pressed on his brow, and the ancestral ermine of his family called upon him to support the honour of the peerage. He felt that the first stains on his escutcheon should not be caused by the tears of a girl—and these his cousin's. All fears of the Punjaub Government and of Blubber were now at an end; he felt that honour called upon him to decide what course he would pursue, and that the decision must be made irrespective of Indian society and the circulars which might be issued on so grave a question by the Punjab Government. Blubber might feel a difficulty in disposing of a commoner's case, but when a peer was concerned, the Earl knew that Blubber would, bird-like, move his second eye-lid pretty freely, and easily see his way to a clear decision.

When the Earl touched Bismillah, and spoke, there was a calmness and precision in his manner which made Bismillah tremble; for she knew intuitively that the moment had arrived which would settle her future prospects in life.

The Earl was the first to speak:—"Cousin, we are alone in the world: the race on which we might have prided ourselves has almost passed away; soon the memory of the family of Timour will have faded away. I am now what I was not lately—a free Agent; I can choose for myself. Bismillah, will you be mine?"

Bismillah was perfectly astonished at the Earl's set speech, and felt so confused at the end of it that she knew not what to make of its meaning. She opened her brilliant eyes, full of wonder, and said—"Dear Cousin, what is the matter?—how awfully solemn you are!"

The Earl felt his coronet relax a little, and said, smiling—"Cousin, I thought I had spoken plainly enough. I asked you whether you would be mine?"

"Be yours!" said Bismillah—"How can I be yours? My dear Cousin, what idea have you got into your head?"

The Earl looked more and more perplexed.

Now Deoti had been seated behind the *purdah*, and understanding something of English ways, and finding that an offer of marriage had been made to her young mistress, without her guessing its purport, slipped quietly into the room, and gently whispered into her mistress' ear—"The Earl has asked you about the *barat*—your marriage!"

In an instant the young girl's eyes flashed fire, and

her cheeks were dyed with the Tartar blood from the north, as she said—"Cousin, your English ways are not our ways, nor your words our words: you should have spoken on such matters to my sister Zeenut." She, however, took her cousin's hand, and said—"My heart tells me you would not deceive a simple girl, your cousin; still I hardly like, in such matters, to trust an English tongue!" ,

Zeenut was at hand, and after a few fairly worded sentences, the Earl explained that he wished to marry Bismillah. Zeenut now took Bismillah's hand and placed it in that of the Earl, and pronounced the betrothal. As soon as Bismillah had heard the welcome words pronounced, she threw herself into the Earl's arms, but said nothing.

The betrothal of the cousins was soon known, and Bismillah was enchanted at the prospect which appeared so bright before her. But there was one point on which she shuddered when she thought of it—her religion. She, however, took a bold course. She spoke to the Earl, and told him that she was willing to listen to all that he had to say, but could not change her religion without being convinced that she was in error. Contrast the belief of an English girl and one shut out from the world in the recesses of a zenana, where, however, youth and age cannot be protected from the jealous eye of time.

CHAPTER L.

BISMILLAH had always watched for the moment when it would be in her power to aid the spirit of her ancestor the Emperor Jehangeer. That moment she felt had now arrived: about to become a countess, she was in a position to ask a favour of the Punjab Government. Having consulted the Earl as to her wishes, an interview with Poppy was arranged for. The request made by the Princess to Poppy was this: "Present my compliments to Sir Robert, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, and say a Princess of the House of Timour will never rest until the ashes of the illustrious Emperor Jehangeer are removed from the hot tomb at Shadera to the lovely valley of Cashmere."

After hearing Bismillah's message, Poppy retired with a humble and submissive bow.

The result of this interview was communicated to Lahore without a moment's delay on Poppy's part: it reached Blubber, the Secretary to the Punjab Government, in due time; but the effect on him was electric—he trembled from head to foot. He at once ordered his buggy, for he felt the gravity of the crisis. He was too nervous to drive; a faithful chuprassee therefore acted as coachman, and he winked to all his friends as he passed them, as much as to say—"See what political influence I have with the Secretary Saheb—may his shadow never be less! May I always serve him, and line my pockets with gold!"

Sir Robert received the exciting news from Blubber's parched tongue calmly and collectedly; a Council was

at once directed to assemble; a telegraphic message, calling for the immediate opinion of Commissioners of Divisions, was at once despatched;—away flew the Guide Cavalry orderlies at full tilt, to carry out these urgent orders.

Mr. Faithful, Mr. Followsuit, Mr. Dreadnought, and Mr. Pleasantongue hurried to the post of imagined danger: the bugle of the Volunteer Corps sounded clear and shrill—"the assembly" was the call.

Sir Robert opened the Council, announcing the cause which had forced him to call them together so suddenly; and requested that all would give an unreserved opinion as to what course should guide the ear of state. Whilst Sir Robert was speaking, a Guide orderly rushed in, with a telegraphic message from Major Ideal.

"Read!" said Sir Robert, with great dignity.

Blubber accordingly read—"I welcome the poetical associations which spring up so spontaneously from Bismillah's appeal; I contrast Jchangeer with Napoleon; the Moslems of India with the French people—Jchangeer restored to the banks of the Jhelum, Napoleon to the banks of the Seine, to the people whom he loved so well. 'Yes, grant the Princess' request!'"

"Another message, from Major Valiantheart!" called out Blubber.

"Read!" said Sir Robert.

"We should always respect the religious feelings of a girl, and listen to a very modest request."

Again, a message from Major Fierypen was opened: "Yes; send the ashes: a refusal may complicate matters on the Frontier!"

Another message was now read—it was from Mr. Bentham: “Let me know how far the tomb of Jehangeer is from the river? Is it subject to inundation in the rains? Is the grave which contains the coffin of the Emperor well secured by pukka masonry? Have you ascertained that the tomb really contains imperial ashes?”

Mr. Faithful was now called on to express his opinion. He rose diffidently, but spoke fluently and attractively: “Gentlemen,—this question embraces more than the mere decision whether the ashes of a great man are to be removed or not. We have to deal with and grapple with the very spirit of Mahomedanism. We are called on to deliberate how the question of removal will affect thousands of Her Majesty’s subjects. What has France become since the ashes of Napoleon have found their resting-place in Paris? What effect on England might not the transfer to London of the ashes of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, or Franklin, have had on our happy isle, before—before—Bull’s Run? Might not the latent spark of dire republicanism have been fanned into a flame? We have reason for much caution: we must not fall in with Major Ideal! or concede, with Major Valiantheart, from mere good nature; or grant a request, as recommended by Major Fierypen, to avoid an anticipated outbreak on the Frontier. Mr. Bentham’s opinion appears to open a door for diplomatic retreat, should the ashes of the Emperor not be found. Gentlemen, these are my ideas and sentiments. I now call on Mr. Followsuit, lately officiating during my absence in England, to express.”

Mr. Followsuit rose briskly and smilingly, and said—
“The question is, shall we or shall we not part with the ashes of the illustrious dead? Shall we transmit to a foreign clime the ashes we politically prize so dearly? Certainly not; it would be a slight to Mahomedanism. My opinion is, that we should reject the application, as the ashes are essential to the safety of the Punjab!”

Then Mr. Dreadnought arose—all kept profound silence. He turned his head and eyes to the right hand and to the left, coughed, and said—“Blubber—I hope no one overhears us!—no eavesdroppers; no plotters concealed in dark corners; no domestic concealed in yonder kiltah?”

“All right!” said Blubber, examining the kiltah (a basket used in the hills, covered with leather).

Mr. Dreadnought cleared his throat, and thus spoke:—
“All know that since I commenced my official career in the Punjab, I have never cast stones at either Europeans or Natives. My object has been hard official work, and a quiet life. I have no enemies—why should I fear? Revenue is our principal object: may not the ashes of Jehangeer become a source of income? In state matters we should have no heart. I recommend that the ashes of Jehangeer be disposed of for a consideration. The income, when realised, should be clearly entered in the Budget of 1862-63!”

Thus Mr. Dreadnought spoke, and all shuddered when they remembered that the finances were at so low an ebb as to shut out an idea of generosity.

Mr. Pleasantongue now spoke:—“Bred within the atmosphere of our courts of law, conversant with their

crooked ways, I am bold to speak. We have constructively held possession of the ashes of the Emperor Jehangeer for a period of more than twelve years, and cannot be forced to give them up, protected as we are, by the procedure of the Punjab Civil Code. Again, by the process of inductive inquiry, we have strong grounds for supposing that India, like France, may be convulsed by ashes:—then retain those of the Emperor!”

Now Blubber rose, profoundly wise, and spoke these words:—“Language so chaste and so refined, opinions so various and yet so sound, have seldom fallen from the lips of pillars of a state in any age. A Competitioner myself, I tread in classic ways, and live on classic flowers. Why do we talk of royal ashes—incorrectly I suppose; for science says, mind knows a change of body in less than twenty years? But why resort to subtle arguments, when the way is so straight? No ashes can be found; the problem’s solved! This a herald has announced fresh from Shader’s groves. Gentlemen—Sir. Robert bids you all depart in peace!”

As soon as the members of the Council had departed, Sir Robert grasped Blubber’s hand, and said—“What splendid brains the Competitioners have! Blubber, you have saved us from a rebellion! You shall be made a C.B., with an increase to your salary of Rs. 1,000 per mensem!”

Blubber then wrote his message to Poppy—“Tomb of Jehangeer opened with great pomp and ceremony; no ashes to be found!”

As Poppy read this message, he sighed, and said—“Alas! the ignorance of mankind: the enamel of the Emperor’s teeth must be somewhere!”

Poppy was right; enamel is immortal!

Poppy communicated the message to Bismillah, and was dismissed by her much in the same way the mouse is permitted by the cat to depart with his skin entire.

"After all," said Bismillah, "the tomb at Shadera was no fit place for a Timour!"

CHAPTER LI.

How pleasant and yet how painful last days are—how the memory dwells on them! How often the Anglo-Indian thinks of the young sister whom he left at home, bright and radiant in golden tresses; the young husband parts with his bride in some of our cherished English homes; he treasures up last words—and falls a victim to an Indian sun. Time runs on, still the desire to return to England remains as strong a passion as ever. Bismillah was now about to take a last view of the Lake of Sireenuggur. She was accompanied by Deoti. The next day was fixed for the wedding. As the boat moved quietly up the stream, how the water sparkled in the sun; how boldly the mountain of Hurmookh stood out, capped with snow! Who could tell what the morrow would bring forth? The boat had now entered the Sireenuggur Lake, and Deoti's small book attracted Bismillah's attention.

"Does your book," she asked, "talk of happy days to come?"

"Yes, Princess; it speaks of many happy things."

An ibex, pressed by the hunter and his dogs, now dashed into the stream not far off, and stood at bay. It was a magnificent sight as dog after dog assailed him, perished, or retreated. The attack was renewed as the hunter urged on his noble dogs from the country of the man-eater, far, far to the north.

"What does your book," said Bismillah, "say to such sports?"

"It says," replied Deoti, unclasping her book and reading—

"As pants the hart for cooling streams,
When heated in the chase——"

The boat passed on. The Princess remained silent for some moments; but observing the wind rising, and the boat rocking, she again asked Deoti—"When in danger, what do you Christians say?"

"We say," answered Deoti—

"In tumults when the heathen raged,
And kingdoms war against us waged,
He thundered and dispersed their powers."

All was again serene; the whirlwind had passed over the lake, but the clouds had collected around Hurmookh, black and ominous. Thus it is with life—at one moment all that's calm, at another all that's gloomy and threatening: still we live on, and hang fondly around immortal hope.

"We shall pass away like the ripple on the surface of the lake," said Bismillah: "others will gaze on the Golden and Silver Isles; the thunder from Hurmookh will strike on other ears; the perfumes of the valley will welcome fresh visitors: where shall we be, Deoti,

in years to come—when youth has been vanquished by old age, old age by the tomb?”

“In good hands, I trust,” replied Deoti, reading—

“When with undisturbed content
His long and happy life is spent,
His end I'll crown with saving health.”

Evening closed in, and the air drew chill and damp. The boat had long since turned, and was shooting under the bridge close to Bismillah's house. “Deoti, where do you choose your poetry?” inquired Bismillah.

“Princess, from the storehouse of the Poet of Israel.”

“Ah!” said Bismillah, as she stepped on shore—
“how many choice flowers we tread on, and never taste their sweetness! But the bee is more careful; for even at this late hour he hums around the rose I was just about to crush.”

CHAPTER LII.

SCIENCE sat enthroned on a peak of the Nunga Purbut, said to be the highest spot but one in the world; snow has covered this spot from age to age. She had marshalled her attendant nymphs, and thus addressed them (we counted amongst them Knowledge, Perseverance, Adroitness, Firmness, Subtle-idea, Clear-perception, and Attention):—

“Danger threatens a favoured son! Hasten to the

Shaikh Garden at Sireenuggur, and beware of water and a bearded man ! ”

Thus warned, the obedient group floated through the air on a pure white cloud, which a gentle favouring breeze from the north urged on until it passed over the Fairies' Hall ; it was reflected in the lambent waters of the Sireenuggur lake, and stood obedient over the Shaikh garden.

The nymphs now observed crowds hurrying to the garden, for it was Bismillah's bridal day. The Maharajah had despatched his special courtiers to honour the ceremony, and to present some choice gifts.

Dewan Kirparam glittered in yellow and gold ; handsome little Dewan Khan Singh is green ; Dewan Zaranaroo had selected crimson ; Sirdar Dura Singh was brilliant in white and silver ; Colonels Bija Singh and Kurreem Singh were in scarlet uniforms ; our old friend Baboo Mahesh Chund, also, was present. A crowd of servants in red velvet uniforms paraded the Maharaja's munificence.

From the river side of the garden the English officers on leave in the Valley came pouring in. Mr. and Mrs. Poppy, Mr. and Mrs. Popkins, and Sir Lionel, were welcomed by Major Elphinstone, and conducted to the pavilion in the Shaikh Garden. The Earl was not long in joining the party ; all remarked how well he looked. There was a stir, and Zeenut, Bismillah, Deoti, Indad Ali, and Zynoodcen arrived. The centre room of the Shaikh Garden House had been fitted up with great taste as a chapel.

An old man of venerable aristocratic appearance now

walked into the garden with great dignity ; his beard was as white as snow, and he carried in his hand a cruse of gold of antique workmanship. As he entered the chapel, all felt a chill, but most of those who were curious as to the weather attributed the change in the atmosphere to the cloud which hung over the garden. But the watchers from the cloud knew better ; for as the favoured son of science* entered the garden, they descended, and, clustering round him, went into the chapel with him.

The Rev. Theodore Bellew's fine voice now intoned the marriage service, and Bismillah was soon welcomed as Countess of Blushington. The Maharaja's deputation showered shawls, pearls, emeralds, diamonds, rubies, and turquoises, at the Bride's feet, uttered the benediction of "*Mabarik bad*," and withdrew. The clergyman made his most graceful bow, and the English officers cried "Long life and happiness to the Bride !" and vanished.

The old man now stepped forward—the nymphs clustered carefully around their charge ; the old white bearded man poured out a little water into the palm of his hand—the nymphs extended their wings to the full width, the old man then sprinkled the water on those who remained, saying—"Bismillah !"

A few drops fell on the wings of the attendant nymphs, who hurried off their charge. But how magical was the mystic sign !—Popkins and his wife

* The writer intends this to apply to Major Montgomerie, whose survey of the Valley of Cashmere is now so well known.

soon began to change to subtle air—to melt away! The expression of Mrs. Popkins's face was still beautiful as she passed; the traces of Mr. Popkins were more difficult to extinguish, for his clerical error—his C.B.-ship—long resisted the Moslem spell.

The sweet savour which attends a lady's toilette for a few moments marked the spot where the couple had yielded; it was a compound of pomade, eau de cologne, lavender water, &c.

Major Elphinstone could only be traced by the sulphur-yellow, bilious-looking mist which curled up where he had so lately stood, confident in official dignity.

But Mr. and Mrs. Poppy made a fearful struggle for life; indeed, at one time the spirit of the Emperor Jehangheer seemed inclined to give way, for Poppy was learned in the mystic art—he knew all the Eastern spells: but one he had forgotten—just at the moment he most needed it. Chaldaean, Babylonian, Tyrian, Egyptian, Jewish, Syrian, Carthaginian, Arabian, Grecian, Roman, Turkish, were at his fingers' ends. He found the water of the mystic spell acting on him; he struck his forehead in despair with his clenched hands; he opened and shut his eyes to assist his memory; he beat his breast in an agony of despair, and shouted out—“Oh! Blubber—help!”

That fearful cry was echoed by the hills around Shap-yan, carried on to the peaks of the Peer Pinjal, to the Kaman Goshak Range, to that of the Adhi-dhak, and then conveyed to Blubber as a still small voice.

Now Blubber was a dabbler in the occult arts, and knew the mystic spell which Poppy had forgotten; he sent it at once to the ex-secretary by the aid of an attendant sprite: “Poppy—be a man! and four times

over repeat, backwards and forwards—‘The Punjab is the best governed country in the world!’—and you are safe!’ Poppy at once attempted this Herculean labour, but he could not repeat more than “The Punjab is the ——” when he began to break up—to melt away. Mrs. Poppy glided off very softly; the last clear outline of her showed that she was trying to recover her lord with the scent of her pocket handkerchief—with musk; but instead of, as Poppy would have said, being a good omen, as it was when distributed by Humayoon, the Emperor of Delhi, on the birth of his son the illustrious Akbar, it availed not the ex-secretary.

Sir Lionel, seeing how matters stood, made a desperate leap, mounted a horse, and rode off with the speed of a Leicestershire fox-hunter. It was no good; the mystic spell overcame him as he reached the house occupied by the guardian monks of the Peer Pinjal Pass, where, years before, the music of the triumphant Empress Noor Jehan, which sounded through the peaks, brought on, it is said, a fearful snow-storm.

Indad Ali and Zynooddeh knelt to the spirit, and were no more; Deoti caught the drop of water which was her share on the cross of her little clasped volume, and escaped: she may be seen in her modest cottage by the curious, if they will search for her close to the throne of Huzarat Bal.

The Earl had disappeared, and Bismillah alone remained, for she had also seen her sister Zeenut melt away, ’Twas then she spoke—“We all must yield to Fate; must all decay: the blushing Bride must cry—‘The race of Timour’s run!’”

At these words, the building in which the bridal party had assembled was rent asunder, and the silver

cloud descended : Bismillah, in her bridal attire, was for a few moments shrouded by it ; but soon the cloud ascended, and was wafted off slowly towards Hurmookh. Her graceful angelic form could be clearly traced, enshrined on the pure white silver cloud.

And now, when the rice-crops are being reaped in the Valley of Cashmere, and snow is dreaded, the maidens say—"No fear to-day : look at the Bridal Clouds, and cry—" Bismillah !"

The young mother, as the wind whistles through her ill-made Cashmeree house, and drifts the snow against her window in the depth of winter, clasps her babe, and cries—" Bismillah !"

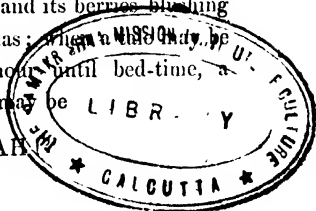
The old man, as he rows down the placid Jhelum in a balmy evening in May, and feels the twinge, the harbinger of death, bows his head submissively, and cries—" Bismillah !"

As the fisherman's boat is tossed to and fro by the uncertain and treacherous waters of the Wallar Lake, his wife on shore watches the clouds on the surrounding mountains, and cries—" Bismillah !"

The hunter, as he wounds the proud ibex on the peaks of the Peer Pinjal, draws his hunting-knife, and, rushing on, calls out—" Bismillah !"

And, perhaps, when the curtains are drawn, and the fire burns bright : when the wind whistles outside some well built English mansion on a winter's night, and the snow mantles around the holly and its berries blushing at the near approach of Christmas ; when a visitor may be required to while away the hour until bed-time, a selection may be made—and it may be

" BISMILLAH



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